

EAST CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE IN THE MIDDLE AGES, 450-1450

# The Birth of a Stereotype

*Polish Rulers and their Country  
in German Writings c. 1000 A.D.*



Andrzej Pleszczyński



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BRILL

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*General Editor*  
Florin Curta

VOLUME 15

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LEIDEN • BOSTON  
2011

*Front cover illustration:* Drawing of Polish coin and a piece of German ivory panel c. 1000 AD.

*Back cover illustration:* Drawing of Polish coin c. 1000 AD.

Drawing made by Anna Grzesiak for Andrzej Pleszczyński.

Translation: Robert Buczyk

The translation of the book was funded by The Foundation for the Polish Science

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

#### Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Pleszczyński, Andrzej.

The birth of a stereotype : Polish rulers and their country in German writings, c. 1000 A.D. / by Andrzej Pleszczyński.

p. cm. — (East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, ISSN 1872–8103 ; v. 15)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-90-04-18554-8 (hbk. : acid-free paper)

1. Poland—History—Piast period, 960-1386—Historiography. 2. Piast dynasty—Public opinion—History—To 1500. 3. Poland—Kings and rulers—Public opinion—History—To 1500. 4. Kings and rulers, Medieval—Public opinion—History—To 1500. 5. Slavs—Public opinion—History—To 1500. 6. Stereotypes (Social psychology)—Germany—History—To 1500. 7. Historiography—Germany—History—To 1500. 8. Poland—Foreign public opinion, German. 9. Germany—Relations—Poland. 10. Poland—Relations—Germany. I. Title. II. Series.

DK4213.P55 2011

943.8'022—dc22

2011009496

ISSN 1872-8103

ISBN 978 90 04 18554 8

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## CONTENTS

Acknowledgements .....	ix
List of Abbreviations .....	xi
Introduction .....	1
Chapter One Appearance of the Piast State within Eyeshot of the Elites in the Liudolfings' Empire .....	9
1.1. Mieszko as 'King of the North'— <i>rex barbarorum</i> .....	10
1.1.1. Widukind on the Events of 963 .....	11
1.1.2. The So-called Account by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub of the Country of Mieszko .....	14
1.1.3. Archetype of the 'Savage Slav'—a Dweller of the North .....	24
1.1.4. <i>Sclavus</i> — <i>captivus, servus</i> .....	36
1.2. <i>Amicus imperatoris</i> .....	41
1.2.1. Account of a Skirmish of Mieszko I with the Veleti and Wichman in 967 .....	41
1.2.2. Meaning of the Term 'Amicitia' in the Chronicle by Widukind .....	51
1.2.3. Mieszko I and the Empire in the Views of Widukind of Corvey and Thietmar of Merseburg .....	64
1.3. Titles of Power of Duke Mieszko I .....	71
1.3.1. <i>Quidam dux Wandalorum, Misico nomine</i> .....	72
1.3.2. <i>Misicho comes et Sclavus</i> .....	83
1.3.3. <i>Misicho marchio</i> .....	90
1.3.4. Significance of Mieszko I's Titles of Power .....	98
Chapter Two Integration of the Piasts' Territorial Power into the Empire of the Liudolfings—Opinions of the German Elites on the Poland of Boleslav Chrobry .....	109
2.1. The Polish Ruler and His Country in German Sources c. 1000 .....	109
2.1.1. <i>Vulpes callida</i> —Power Struggle in Poland after Mieszko I's Death .....	110

2.1.2. <i>Amicus familiaris</i> —Relationships between Boleslav Chrobry and Margrave Ekkehard I .....	120
2.1.3. <i>Dominus [Sclaviniae]</i> —German Sources on the Events of 1000 .....	126
2.1.4. Origin of the Names: The Poles and Poland .....	139
2.2. Opinions by Brun of Querfurt and Thietmar of Merseburg on the Polish Ruler .....	148
2.2.1. <i>Dei servorum mater</i> —the Guardian of Church and a Helper of Christianization .....	149
2.2.2. <i>Dux infaustus</i> —an Evil Ruler and a False Christian .....	162
2.3. Congress of Merseburg, July 1002 .....	182
2.3.1. The Context and Course of the Congress, Boleslav Chrobry’s Participation .....	184
2.3.2. The Attack on Boleslav Chrobry in the Structure of Thietmar’s Narration .....	191
2.3.3. Reasons for Breaking the Alliance between Henry II and Boleslav Chrobry and the Alleged Instigators of the Attack on the Piast Retinue .....	197
2.3.4. Henry II and the Saxon Elites: Boleslav Chrobry’s Place in the Political Structure of the Region .....	216
 Chapter Three Polarisation of Attitudes towards the Polish State and the Prevalence of Views Unfavourable to the Piast Monarchy .....	 223
3.1. Mieszko II—Thietmar’s <i>Miles Regis</i> .....	224
3.1.1. Family Background of Mieszko II’s Mother .....	224
3.1.2. Congress of Merseburg 1013 .....	232
3.1.3. Mieszko II—the “Civilised” Duke .....	248
3.2. <i>Rex invictissimus</i> —Mieszko II in Mathilda’s Codex .....	254
3.2.1. Archangel Michael—Field Commander of the Army of God and Satan’s Adversary .....	256
3.2.2. St. Sebastian—an Ascetic and a Soldier of Christ .....	263
3.2.3. Dedicational Miniature .....	274
3.3. <i>Misako [...] ipsum sousque, immo diaboli satellites</i> —Mieszko II, Servant of the Devil .....	285
3.3.1. The 1025 Piast Coronations as Viewed by German Observers .....	286
3.3.2. The Piast Coronations of 1025 in the Historical Context .....	295

3.3.3. The King's Status and how it Changed throughout the Early Middle Ages .....	302
3.3.4. Salian Monarchs and the Royal Institution in Poland .....	309
Conclusion .....	323
Bibliography .....	331
Index .....	347





## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would not have been written without the support of a number of people. The most important for the present shape it acquired were conversations and discussions with Jacek Banaszkiewicz and my colleagues from the Department of Mediaeval History in the Institute of History at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University. I am very grateful for this invaluable help.

I am also greatly indebted to the institutions which sponsored my research in scientific libraries, both in Poland and in German academic centres. First of all, thanks to the Foundation for Polish Science (Fundacja na rzecz Nauki Polskiej), which founded a scholarship for me, I could conduct my scientific investigation in Tübingen. The Max-Planck-Institut für Geschichte and the Polish Historical Mission financed my stay in Göttingen. I would like to express my thanks to consecutive directors of my home institution—the Institute of History at Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin for their contribution to financing my study during scientific expeditions.

I would like also to thank Przemysław Wiszewski, who encouraged me, and Piotr Górecki, who recommended my book to be included in Brill's series East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages. In addition, I am grateful to Richard Geoffrey Eales of Kent University at Canterbury in the UK for his precious comments and suggestions regarding the English translation of this book.

And last by no means least I want to thank my family—my wife Małgorzata and my children Michał, Irmina and Katarzyna. I thank them for many things but first of all for tolerating my whim to practice humanities.



## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

AfK	Archiv für Kulturgeschichte
AQDGM	Ausgewählte Quellen zur Deutschen Geschichte des Mittelalters. Freiherr vom Stein-Gedächtnisausgabe
DA	Deutsches Archiv für Erforschung des Mittelalters
ErgBd	Ergänzungsband
HZ	Historische Zeitschrift
KH	Kwartalnik Historyczny
LMA	Lexikon des Mittelalters
MGH	Monumenta Germaniae Historia/ DD=diplomata/ i.u.s = in usum scholarum/ SS = scriptores/ RG = rerum germanicarum NS = nova series
MIÖG	Mitteilungen der Österreichischen Institut für Geschichtsforschung
MPH	Monumenta Poloniae Historica
NF	Neue Folge
RGSEO	Regesten zur Geschichte der Slaven
RH	Roczniki Historyczne
SA	Slavia Antiqua
Sn.	Series nova
SSS	Słownik Starożytności Słowiańskich
SZ	Studia Źródłoznawcze
<i>The 'Chronicon'</i>	Ottonian Germany
<i>Thietmar</i>	<i>Kronika Thietmara</i>
VuF	Vorträge und Forschungen
<i>Widukind</i>	<i>Widukindi res gestae</i>
ZfO	Zeitschrift für Ostforschung
ZRG	Zeitschrift der Savigny Stiftung für Rechtgeschichte; Germ. Abt. = Germanische Abteilung/ Kan. Abt. = Kanonische Abteilung



## INTRODUCTION

The Poles,<sup>1</sup> just like the Slavs in general, used to be perceived by western Europeans as in a way inferior. They were ascribed vulgarity, ridiculed for their allegedly peculiar customs, and they even happened to be seen as barbarians.<sup>2</sup> This phenomenon—well noticeable in the modern period—was seemingly justifiable in reality. Accounts of travellers and other texts devoted to the countries of Central and Eastern Europe confirm that the impression of their authors was gloomy and depressing. They saw a poor organization of local communities, roads in a terrible condition, extreme poverty of villages and deprivation of towns, which contrasted with the opulence of manor houses belonging to magnates, whose owners were not likeable because of their attitude, often inhumane, towards their serfs. Every historian who deals with these problems will find such foreign observations largely sensible, looking for the reasons of this state of affairs in a specific historical process which implied individual parameters of a society and its wealth.

Paradoxically, however, the origins and nature of the stereotype of a Pole—Slav—barbarian have nothing in common with any realities of the modern world. We can find some traces of the above mentioned attitude towards Central Europeans in the texts which were written on the territory of the Frankish empire and its succession states as early as from the 7th century onwards, before any real knowledge of the regions of Europe to the east of the Elbe, which were inhabited by the Slavs.

Many years ago I found this problem interesting enough to deal with, so I decided to investigate it more thoroughly. Soon after that I realized that this matter, which pertains to so many centuries in history, is very complex. For this reason I had to set some subject restrictions to my study in order to maintain its in-depth character. Thus I decided to analyze this phenomenon with reference to the origins and first formative years in the history of the oldest Piast state, namely between 963 and 1034.

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<sup>1</sup> On the characteristics of this expression see chapter 1.1 of this work.

<sup>2</sup> On the problem of perceiving the eastern part of the continent in modern history see: Larry Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe. The Map of Civilization on the Mind of Enlightenment* (Stanford, 1994); on the early Middle Ages: David Fraesdorf, *Der barbarische Norden. Vorstellungen und Fremdkategorien bei Rimbert, Thietmar von Merseburg, Adam von Bremen und Helmold von Bosau* (Berlin, 2005).

In geographical terms, the problem of perceiving this fresh political organism on the map of the Europe of the day actually limits itself to the immediate neighbours of Poland from within the circle of the already established and literate Christian civilization, thus to the observers living in Germany.

They were the only ones among all Western European nationals at that time who took interest (certainly, to a much smaller degree than in the areas of the post-Carolingian civilization) in the lands situated to the east of the Elbe and ventured some opinions about them.

This work could not be limited to the collection and simple examination of sources devoted to the inhabitants of Poland in the period under discussion, which is typical of traditional historical studies.<sup>3</sup> Our references are few and far between and in principle very laconic, so not much information can be retrieved from them without an in-depth analysis. The written sources can only tell us more while put in the right cultural and historical context. It also helps when we investigate the role that selected excerpts of texts played in the structure of whole narratives. This approach enables us to recover the nuances in information inflow which are included in these reports.

This study, as regards the methodology and its workshop, is based on two pillars: the one is a broad analysis of sources, the other—an investigation of the political and cultural background of the references chosen for examination.

The task of selecting the right scientific methods within the former of these two spheres has been recently facilitated by some studies which are very instructive in their modern critical approaches, both theoretical and practical, towards mediaeval sources.

Especially valuable in this respect were those studies which deepen our knowledge of the structure of a source and the convention of plots, which shaped the character of mediaeval accounts.<sup>4</sup> Important and inspiring from

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<sup>3</sup> This sort of works have already been written. As far as Poland is concerned, one of the examples is: Andrzej F. Grabski, *Polska w opiniach obcych X–XIII wieku* (Warszawa, 1964); for the Slav lands: Lech A. Tyszkiewicz, *Słowianie w historiografii wczesnego średniowiecza do połowy VI wieku* (Wrocław, 1990); Lech A. Tyszkiewicz, *Słowianie w historiografii wczesnego średniowiecza od połowy VI do połowy VII wieku* (Wrocław, 1991); even though these works are useful for collecting source information, otherwise scattered, they analyzed it only superficially.

<sup>4</sup> In this matter relevant were works by Jacek Banaszekiewicz. This author does not write theoretical studies, thus we can only learn about his scientific method by reading his individual works, of which the most extensive is: Jacek Banaszekiewicz, *Polskie dzieje bajeczne mistrza Wincentego Kadłubka* (Warszawa, 1998); in general on the prospects for contemporary mediaeval studies: Otto G. Oexle, “‘Wissenschaft’ und ‘Leben’. Historische Reflexionen über Tragweite und Grenzen der modernen Wissenschaft”, *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und*

my point of view are the works that show how the circumstances in which mediaeval texts were written influenced their content.<sup>5</sup> Equally significant were deliberations on the characteristic features of the historical narration of the day.<sup>6</sup>

All the works of this kind make us realize that it is impossible to assess the informative value of an account unless an in-depth analysis of its structure is carried out, considering its origin and function. Of course, this sort of scholarly commitment to examine specific texts is extremely hampered by synthesizing thinking, the most appreciated by amateurs. A researcher always faces the problem of finding a middle ground and a compromise. Scholars also have to resolve a dilemma how far they have to go in creating a certain general narration of the past and simultaneously distance themselves from the realities of the source.

Another sphere of a scientific approach, even more complex, which needed to be comprehended and organized for our study was the historical and cultural context standing behind the sources that formed a departure point for our considerations.

The first task that had to be performed was the tackling with the paradigm of traditional historical studies, which had a practice of considering political organizations of the earlier Middle Ages to be direct predecessors of contemporary states. In addition, this sort of ‘period of the origin’ was usually mythologized, and it was also identified with the dawn in the history of a nation.<sup>7</sup> Such a scientific approach usually had its consequences. Among other things, this distant past was, and sometimes is, interpreted in the whole of Europe, and it is not only about linguistic terms, by using categories typical of the descriptions of modern states and nations.

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*Unterricht* 41 (1990), 145–161; Hans-Walter Goetz, *Moderne Mediävistik. Stand und Perspektiven der Mittelalterforschung* (Darmstadt, 1999).

<sup>5</sup> E.g.: Philippe Buc, “Ritual and interpretation: the early medieval case”, *Early Medieval Europe* 9 (2000), 183–210; or: Philippe Buc, “Writing Ottonian hegemony: Good rituals and bad rituals in Liutprand of Cremona”, *Majestas*, 4 (1996), 3–38; but especially: Philippe Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual. Between Early Medieval Texts and Social Scientific Theory* (Princeton, 2001).

<sup>6</sup> E.g.: *Medieval Concepts of the Past. Ritual, Memory, Historiography*, eds. Gerd Althoff, Johannes Fried, Patrick J. Geary (Cambridge, 2002).

<sup>7</sup> More on this issue: Jacek Banaszkiewicz, “Podania o ‘Początku’”, in *Dynastie Europy*, ed. Antoni Mączak (Wrocław, 2003), pp. 16–40; Przemysław Urbańczyk, “Początki państw wczesnośredniowiecznych w Europie Środkowowschodniej”, in *Ziemie polskie w X wieku i ich znaczenie w kształtowaniu się nowej mapy Europy*, ed. Henryk Samsonowicz (Kraków, 2000), pp. 53–70; Patrick Geary, *The Myth of Nations. The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2002).



In consequence a number of studies have been written in which mediaeval secular and ecclesiastical leaders are perceived as modern statesmen, patriots and ideologists concerned about their state, *raison d'état*, and the nation.<sup>8</sup>

This is obviously a multifaceted problem and I mention it not only to separate myself from this kind of practice of 'nationalizing' history, which is not beneficial to learning, but also to defend the terminology used in this work.

More precisely, I perfectly realize that some terms, for example: the Poles, Germans, or Poland, Germany, as well as the adjectives which were formed on the basis of these words, are inadequate with regard to the Middle Ages, especially the earlier Middle Ages.<sup>9</sup> Even the term 'state' and the like raise doubts. All these words have modern associations, more or less alien to the epoch under consideration. With this respect, however, one cannot sharpen the language and make it more precise, and therefore I have to apply all these appellations out of necessity, because of lack of other communicative signs.

The problem of the precision of the narration used in this work is, of course, of secondary importance. More significant is the accuracy of the interpretation of a certain language of culture whose fragments are included in the sources selected for the analysis. Past generations of historians tended not to notice subtle, yet sometimes quite obvious differences between contemporary and mediaeval codes and social norms. At present it is impossible to ignore this kind of factors.

It turned out to be crucial for this subject to use the studies referring to the problem of feeling closeness and perceiving alienation in the Middle Ages,<sup>10</sup> and also the works regarding the specificity of consciousness and collective

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<sup>8</sup> An example of this sort of opinion: Stefan Weinfurter, "Kaiser Heinrich II. und Bolesław Chrobry: Herrscher mit ähnlichen Konzepten?", *Questiones Medii Aevi Novae* 9 (2004), 5–25. The paradigm of political historiography, perceived ahistorically, was predominant in old Polish and German studies—see the following discussion as a good example: Albert Brackmann, "Reichpolitik und Ostpolitik im früheren Mittelalter", *Sitzungsberichte der Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, phil.-hist. Kl.* 23 (1935), 3–23 and the review by: Zygmunt Wojciechowski, *RH* (1936), 131–135.

<sup>9</sup> See e.g.: Carlrichard Brühl, *Deutschland—Frankreich. Die Geburt zweier Völker* (Köln-Wien, 1990), p. 296f.; Karl-Friedrich Werner, "Deutschland, A. Begriff; geografisch-historische Problematik; Entstehung", *LMA* vol. 3, pp. 782–790.

<sup>10</sup> E.g.: *Wahrnehmungs- und Deutungsmuster im europäischen Mittelalter*, eds. Hartmut Bleumer, Stephan Patzold (Berlin, 2004); Bernhard Streck, "Ritual und Fremdverstehen", in *Rituale und Ritualisierung*, ed. Alfred Schäfer (Opladen, 1998), pp. 49–60; a certain systematization of the problem by: Jerzy Strzelczyk, "Die Wahrnehmung des Fremden im mittelalterlichen Polen", in *Die Begegnung des Westens mit dem Osten. Kongressakten des 4. Symposiums des Mediävistenverbandes in Köln 1991 aus Anlaß des 1000. Todesjahres der Kaiserin Theophanu*, eds. Odilo Engels, Paul Schreiner (Sigmaringen 1993), pp. 203–220; see also: Volker Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde. Identität und Fremdheit in den Chroniken Adams von Bremen, Helmolds von Bosau und Arnold von Lübeck* (Berlin, 2002).

memory.<sup>11</sup> I also explored the references, hardly used in old historical studies, where all forms of human behaviour are discussed: rituals, gestures, and means of non-verbal communication in general.<sup>12</sup>

The new methods applied in the study of the Middle Ages, in terms of methodology and tools, are of great significance, primarily for the research on the history of Poland of the first Piasts and the country's contacts with the medieval German Empire. They allow us to come up with new interpretations of the accounts that have been already described and analyzed a number of times. As a consequence, many of older findings turn out not to be able to defend themselves—even though a significant part of old studies are still valuable.

As far as older historical studies are concerned, one has to admit that the 10th and the early 11th centuries were popular among historians, both in Poland and in Germany. The epoch of the early Piasts, just like the relations between the Poland and Germany of the day,<sup>13</sup> were discussed in a huge number of studies, whose authors tried to deal with all possible, even less significant aspects of life of the Polish society in the early Middle Ages, the political organization of the state, and its political contacts with its neighbours.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Patrick Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance. Memory and Oblivion at the End of the First Millennium* (Princeton, 1994).

<sup>12</sup> E.g.: Gerd Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale. Symbolik und Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 2003); Gerd Althoff, *Inszenierte Herrschaft. Geschichtsschreibung und politisches Handeln im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 2003); see also: Gerd Althoff, "Zum Inszenierungscharakter öffentlicher Kommunikation im Mittelalter", in *Von Fakten und Fiktionen*, ed. Gerd Althoff (Köln, 2003), pp. 79–93; and: Hagen Keller, "Ritual, Symbolik und Visualisierung in der Kultur des ottonischen Reiches", *FMS* 35 (2001), 23–59; Zbigniew Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics. Writing the History of a Dynamic Conflict in Medieval Poland*, East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450, vol. 3, general ed. Florin Curta (Leiden – Boston, 2008).

<sup>13</sup> Jarosław Sochacki, *Stosunki publicznoprawne między państwem polskim a Cesarstwem Rzymskim w latach 963–1102* (Słupsk-Gdańsk, 2003)—see a thorough review of the work and problem: Dariusz A. Sikorski, "O stosunkach polsko-niemieckich z X i XI wieku", *Studia historia Slavo-Germanica* 26 (2004–2005/2006), 245–275.

<sup>14</sup> It is impossible to list the whole range of valuable works concerning the earliest period in the history of the Piast state. A few syntheses, however, are worth mentioning. The ones in which some older approaches in historical studies towards our subject are reflected are the following: *Początki państwa polskiego. Księga tysiąclecia*, vol. 1–2, ed. Kazimierz Tymieniecki (Poznań, 1962); see also: Gerard Labuda, *Studia nad początkami państwa polskiego*, vol. 1–2 (Poznań 1987); and more recent studies: *Ziemia polskie w X wieku*; and: *Osadnictwo i architektura ziem polskich w dobie Zjazdu Gnieźnieńskiego*, ed. Andrzej Buko, Zygmunt Świechowski (Warszawa, 2000); in the context of the history of the Slavic lands: Christian Lübke, *Regesten zur Geschichte der Slaven an Elbe und Oder (vom Jahr 900 an)*, vol. 1–5 (Berlin, 1984–1988), vol. 1—an extensive bibliography, hereafter referred to as: *RGSEO*; see also: *Europas Mitte um 1000. Beiträge zur Geschichte, Kunst und Archäologie*, ed. Alfred Wieczorek, Hans-Martin Hinz, vol. 1–3 (Stuttgart, 2000): texts with numerous photographs of the sites and bibliographies.

These studies, however, lack any serious consideration of the sphere of cultural, not only political circumstances created for the perception and cultural classification of the first Polish rulers and their state.<sup>15</sup>

The aim of this work is to fill this gap in our knowledge—provided the author manages to show enough expertise and skill to deliver. Every time, when the sources permit, I always make attempts to go beyond the opinions recorded in texts and get to the information layer which registers actions, gestures, and public behaviour of the Piasts. There is no doubt that the Polish rulers wanted to influence the quality of their image which was created among the elites of the Ottonian and Salian state, their important political and cultural partner.<sup>16</sup> This is confirmed by the sources which read that the Polish rulers—quite young in the Christian circle—attempted to convey the ‘public opinion’ of the German empire of the day their call to be treated as ‘civilized’ representatives of their dynasty, valuable both politically and culturally, and predestined to hold their due high-ranking position in the hierarchy of power in Central Europe.<sup>17</sup>

This outlined message they spread was probably in principal subliminal, sometimes even spontaneous, variable in time, and full of nuances adjusted to current realities. Yet it still possessed some general, characteristic traits, at least during the period under consideration, namely in the period of what was known as the First Piast Monarchy.

Our analysis begins when the Polish rulers were noticed by chroniclers (963) and ends with the final days in the rule of Mieszko II (1034). The

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<sup>15</sup> The value of the problem under consideration has been noticed by: Jacek Banaszekiewicz, “Mieszko I i władcy jego epoki”, in *‘Civitas Schinesghe’. Mieszko I i początki państwa polskiego*, ed. Jan M. Piskorski (Poznań – Gniezno, 2004), pp. 89–110.—but only on the margin of the main discussion. The following biographies do not cover the whole problem either: Stanisław Zakrzewski, *Bolesław Chrobry Wielki* (Lwów, 1925/ second edition: Kraków, 2000); Gerard Labuda, *Mieszko II król Polski (1025–1034). Czasy przełomu w dziejach państwa polskiego* (Kraków, 1992); or a non-specialist work: Jerzy Strzelczyk, *Mieszko Pierwszy* (Poznań, 1992); Jerzy Strzelczyk, *Bolesław Chrobry* (Poznań, 1999); Gerard Labuda, *Mieszko I* (Wrocław, 2002); shorter essays: Bronisław Nowacki, “Symbolika prawna zjazdów monarchów polskich z władcami niemieckimi od X do połowy XII wieku”, *RH* 43 (1977), 1–28; Marian Z. Jedlicki, “Układ Merseburski z roku 1013”, *Przegląd Zachodni* (1952), 748–769; and the German collection of studies: *Polen und Deutschland vor 1000 Jahren. Die Berliner Tagung über den “Akt von Gnesen”*, Europa im Mittelalter 5, ed. Michael Borgolte (Berlin, 2002).

<sup>16</sup> This important issue of self-presentation, which was a kind of fight for prestige and the position in the hierarchy, sometimes subliminal, is discussed by: Erving Goffman, *The presentation of self in everyday life*, London 1969—it is a sociological study, but it is also of some significance for historical studies.

<sup>17</sup> Civilized in accordance with the meaning of this word of the day: Arnold Angenendt, “Christentum und Akkulturation”, in *Tradition und Innovation. Denkanstöße für Kirche und Theologie*, ed. Wilhelm Geerlings (Paderborn, 2003), pp. 9–32.

first date can be easily justified: there is no earlier information provided by written sources which concern the Polish state. As far as this other dividing line is concerned, it has to be emphasized that a lot changed in Poland after Mieszko II's death. The time of anarchy started, which led to the collapse of the state. Later on, after its restoration, the status of the Piasts among the regional powers was completely different from previously, and also the relations with the empire were based on different foundations.

The principle which was applied for the selection of the material, the starting point for our consideration, was the origin of the account. The aim was to register opinions and impressions which were made in Germany exactly in the period of the First Piast Monarchy. This task was not always easy to perform. A large number of the accounts under discussion have only been preserved in later texts, being what could be named their integral part. After all, it was a common practice among mediaeval authors to incorporate to the works they compiled all older notes they possessed, as long as they matched more or less the character of such texts. They could not be ignored in this dissertation, so I used some of the relevant information from later sources, written till around the mid—11th century. In every case, however, I followed the guidelines of source studies and tried to select the original content. All other materials—even if they are used—are of secondary importance.

In general the material analyzed in this work has been organized according to the simplest possible schemes. Each chapter concerns the rule of one monarch of the First Piast Monarchy, according to the chronological order: Mieszko I (d. 992), Boleslav Chrobry/the Brave (d. 1025), and Mieszko II (d. 1034). This division is partly symbolic, because not all the problems discussed here suited the framework so arranged. In such cases I placed the presented issue where it was the most appropriate due to the logic of the narration and the relevance of the problem.

Each chapter of this dissertation is divided into a few parts, which undergo further divisions into smaller units. This arrangement has been made to fully concentrate on the problems under discussion. The basis for each heading of such units were certain, the most significant in a specific period, names, titles, or simply expressions applied to the Polish rulers by the authors of texts, as their opinions or reactions to the actions, gestures, and behaviour of the Piasts. These, in a way, 'labels' render in their condensed form the views not only of the authors, but also—as it seems—their milieu. They also concern the status of the Polish rulers and their country in a broad context in relation to the German state of the day.



## CHAPTER ONE

### APPEARANCE OF THE PIAST STATE WITHIN EYESHOT OF THE ELITES IN THE LIUDOLFINGS' EMPIRE

By the 10th century Central Europe, and the territory of present Poland in particular, was practically not mentioned in Western European writing—which confirms that little interest had been taken in this area and little knowledge possessed on this subject.<sup>1</sup> The few texts which somehow engaged with this region, on the basis of the trace acquaintance with the erudition of classical Romans, applied the general term ‘Germania’ to this part of the Continent as if not noticing any ethnic transformations that had taken place there since antiquity and the Slavization of vast European territories in the West as far as the estuary of the Elbe, the upper Main, the summits of the Alps and the Adriatic shores. Central European territories and peoples seem to have only been noticed in works by early medieval intellectuals on account of mentioning military matters, documenting evangelizing activities, and partially, perhaps, as the reflection of the interests of merchants<sup>2</sup>—in general, however, the feelings of alienation, also aversion and even hostility towards the Slavs are detectable in these texts. This attitude is understandable to a certain degree if one considers cultural and religious differences between the inhabitants of the Frankish territories, who for a long time had been Christianized and acquainted, at least to a point, with the tradition of the Mediterranean civilization, and the strangers from the East.

In the first part of our study we will attempt to identify the most characteristic traits in the description of the negative image of a Slav, presented

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<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, even in the current historiography Europe, ends at the Elbe—see e.g.: Michael McCormick, *Origins of European Economy. Communication and Commerce, A.D. 300–900* (Cambridge, 2001); Julia M. H. Smith, *Europe after Rome. A New Cultural History 500–1000* (Oxford, 2005); differently: Robert Bartlett, *The Making of Europe. Conquest, Colonization, and Cultural Change 950–1350* (Princeton 1993).

<sup>2</sup> E.g.: *Descriptio civitatum et regionum ad septentrionalem plagam Danubii* (Description of Cities and Lands North of the Danube)—the text was written in the first half of the 9th century in Bayern; recently about this issue: Gerhard Billig, “Zur Rekonstruktion der ältesten slawischen Burgbezirke im obersächsisch-meißnischen Raum auf der Grundlage des Bayerischen Geographen”, *Neues Archiv für sächsische Geschichte* 66 (1995), 27–67; Jerzy Nalepa, “O nowszym ujęciu problematyki plemion słowiańskich u ‘Geografa Bawarskiego’. Uwagi krytyczne”, *Slavia Occidentalis* 60 (2003), 9–6; see also: Janet Bately, “King Alfred and the Old English Translation of Orosius”, *Anglia* 88 (1970), 433–460.

both in Frankish sources and those slightly later ones, which can be named German. We will also observe how the elites of the emerging Piast state, which assumed growing importance after the mid 10th century, tried to break unpleasant associations that were attached to them and their people in order to be able to effectively cooperate with an important, in their view, political partner—the Ottonian empire.

Such co-operation was mutually advantageous; thus some circles in the empire of the Liudolfing dynasty accepted the new allies, whereas some others opposed this arrangement absolutely—a serious task to perform in this chapter will be to single out the ideological stances of both groups and to scrutinize their elements.

Our considerations will produce, let us hope, an interesting survey of the issues which on the outskirts of the Western civilization of the 10th century determined what sort of people, with their own personality features or at least the ones ascribed to them by their political partners, could be considered as ‘one of us’ and culturally ‘adopted’. Also what were the obstacles in the way of this process—even considering the perspective of significant political gains, which required co-operation. We will investigate all this following the life of the first historic duke of Poland, Mieszko, who in the oldest German sources was called the ruler of some unknown ‘barbarians’, only to deserve later, towards the end of his life, to be provided with the respectful title of ‘a European duke’.

### 1.1 MIESZKO AS ‘KING OF THE NORTH’—*REX BARBARORUM*

The oldest extant mentions of Mieszko I date back to the 960s. Their author’s name is Widukind, a monk of the monastery in Corvey, who more-or-less at the same time wrote his work concerning the history of the Saxons *Res gestae saxonicae sive annalium libri tres* [The Three Books of the Deeds of the Saxons], which he began from the legendary origins of this people until his day.<sup>3</sup> The work was completed in 967 or 968, when it was dedicated to Mathilda, the young daughter of Otto I, then newly appointed abbess of Quedlinburg. However, in some manuscripts, the history was continued down to 973 (add-

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<sup>3</sup> *Widukindi res gestae saxonicae*, AQDGM 8: *Quellen zur Geschichte der Kaiserzeit. Widukinds Sachsengeschichte. Adalberts Fortsetzung der Chronik Reginos. Liutprands Werke*, ed. Albert Bauer (Darmstadt, 1975), pp. 16–183 (hereafter cited as: *Widukind*); Eng. transl.: Raymond F. Wood, *The Three Books of the Deeds of the Saxons, by Widukind of Corvey, Dissertation. University of California* (Los Angeles, 1949)—unfortunately not available for me.

ing several chapters to Book 3), whether by Widukind himself or another author.<sup>4</sup> Although the information concerning Mieszko is very concise in its form, its respective components, when collated, turn out to complement each other, and if they are put in the context of other sources, especially the so called Account by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub<sup>5</sup> (more on this work in chapter 1.1.2), they allow us to reach some relatively far-reaching interpretations.

The first, in a chronological order, written mention of the Polish ruler by the Corvey chronicler refers to year 963 and provides a brief account of the duke's skirmishes, which he lost, with the Veleti, a Slavic people which was at that time inhabiting the territory that stretched to the west of the estuary of the Oder to the Baltic Sea. A similar problem was depicted in another mention of the Piast ruler by the Saxon historian. This time, however, it reports on the duke's victory over the aforementioned enemy in 968. These two accounts have been the subject of extensive commentaries. They have focused on political issues and on some questions concerning problematic dating of the events described by the chronicler.<sup>6</sup> Another, large group of historical works associated with the accounts by the Saxon author concerns a very interesting yet probably insoluble matter of his calling Mieszko I's subjects by an unknown term of 'Livicaviki', which was used only once.<sup>7</sup> The considerations mentioned here, however, do not exhaust the information value of Widukind's laconic references. For one can try to determine, on the basis of the information delivered by the chronicler, the way the Polish Piast ruler and his state were perceived by contemporary German observers, in whose opinions—to put it in a nutshell—Mieszko was the ruler of dangerous barbarians.

### 1.1.1 *Widukind on the Events of 963*

It is uncertain how the monk of Corvey learnt about the fights between the Piast ruler and the Veleti. It is unlikely, however, that he took information from written sources: the events were contemporary to his life and they directly engaged his relatives—one can therefore suppose with a fair

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<sup>4</sup> On this person see: Gerd Althoff, *Inszenierte Herrschaft*, pp. 78–105; Sverre Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and the Right Order of the World in German Historiography c. 950–1150* (Leiden, 2002), pp. 23ff.

<sup>5</sup> Ibrāhīm ibn Ya'qūb al-Isrā'īlī aṭ-Ṭurtūšī, **or**: Ibrāhīm ibn Ya'qūb (al-Tartushi [often like this instead of 'al-Ṭurtūshī']); sometimes also: Abraham ben Jacob—we use the form: Ibrahim ibn Yaqub.

<sup>6</sup> Labuda, *Studia nad poczatkami*, vol. 1, p. 5ff.

<sup>7</sup> For more information see below note no. 14.



degree of certainty that he heard about Mieszko I's activities orally. It is also likely that he kept a written record of these events. The first in a series of his aforementioned notes—that one which is of our particular interest, associated with the year 963, which we will try to justify below—brings us a kind of distant memory of the past events, and at the same time documents the nature of Mieszko I's perception by Saxon circles still before the baptism of the Piast ruler (966). Even though in our present analysis we will also refer to the other note by Widukind, the core consideration exclusively devoted to it will be placed in the next part of this work. Here we will only focus on the first mention.

Although the monk of Corvey, just like a number of his contemporary chroniclers, did not necessarily provide the precise dates of the events he described, the analysis of the text and examination of its historical context suggest that the message of our interest refers to 963, not to the next year as it has sometimes been suggested.<sup>8</sup> In this particular sequence of his work, however, Widukind by no means concentrated on the Polish ruler, he only mentioned him on the occasion of giving an account of the affairs and adventures of his relative, margrave Wichman, a colourful and controversial figure.<sup>9</sup>

The final stage in the life of this Saxon lord matters if we want to understand the character of the Saxon chronicler's account. We will give it more consideration during the discussion of the skirmish between the margrave and Mieszko I in 968.<sup>10</sup> In this place it should only be mentioned that the margrave's major occupations in the final years of his life were a number of conflicts with his paternal uncle, Herman Billung, the administrator of Saxony, and also with Otto I himself. It was the Veleti that traditionally opposed the German ruler, thus Wichman, who was forced to flee his fatherland after his lost fight against the emperor's troops, sought refuge in their territory before 963.<sup>11</sup> Those western Slavs were at that time engaged in a military

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<sup>8</sup> The controversies over the dating of this event are discussed in brief by: Strzelczyk, *Mieszko Pierwszy*, p. 81ff.; see: Gerard Labuda, "Widukind i Thietmar o wypadkach z r. 963", in Labuda, *Studia nad początkami*, vol. 1, pp. 5–54, who also suggests the quoted date. See also the opposite opinion: *RGSEO*, vol. 2, no. 122, pp. 168ff.

<sup>9</sup> Gerd Althoff, "Wichman I. und II.", in *LMA* 9, p. 60; see also: Eduard Hlawitschka, "Kontroversen aus dem Umfeld von König Heinrichs I. Gemahlin Mathilde", in Eduard Hlawitschka, *'Stirps regia'. Forschungen zum Königtum und Führungsschichten im früheren Mittelalter. Ausgewählte Aufsätze. Festgabe zu seinem 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Gertrud Thoma (Frankfurt a. Main, 1988), pp. 355–376.

<sup>10</sup> Chapter 1.2 of this work.

<sup>11</sup> Strzelczyk, *Mieszko Pierwszy*, p. 85; Wolfgang Brüske, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Lutizenbundes. Deutsch-wendische Beziehungen des 10.–12. Jahrhunderts* (Münster – Köln, 1955), p. 29ff.

conflict with Mieszko—so it does not surprise anybody that the outlaw and his companions joined them. The chronicler ascribed to his relative a decisive role in the victory:

[Wichman] scored a double victory over king Mieszko, who was the ruler of the Slavs called Licicaviki, and killed his brother as well as took away great booty from him.<sup>12</sup>

The details concerning the events described by the chronicler are not known *and* therefore they have become subject to different academic speculations.<sup>13</sup> They, however, form a separate problem not to be discussed here. We will also pass over the question of *Licicaviki*.<sup>14</sup> Of greater importance here, considering the scope of our work, is the cultural context of mentioning Mieszko in the account.

Let us remark that Widukind, preceding his message about the losses of the Polish ruler stated that his adventurous relative had been hosted by ‘barbarians’.<sup>15</sup> The chronicler meant the Veleti, or their most important tribe—the Redars.<sup>16</sup> So far there has been nothing strange in the attribute used by the chronicler, as the term used here is typical of mediaeval sources with regard to pagans.<sup>17</sup> Further on, however, our historical writer in his account on the attacks of the Veleti and Wichman on the country of Mieszko, also applies the same term to the Poles:

[Wichman] troubled farther living barbarians with his frequent invasions.<sup>18</sup>

Even if these words were written down, which is possible, just after the events of 963, the redaction of the chronicle probably began, as we already mentioned, in 968, or even later. This particular information was placed in Widukind’s text next to another mention on Mieszko I, which also this time

<sup>12</sup> “*Misacam regem, cuius potestatis erant Sclavi qui dicuntur Licicaviki, duabus vicibus superavit fratremque ipsius interfecit, predam magnam ab eo extorsit*”—*Widukind*, p. 170, (3,66).

<sup>13</sup> *RGSEO*, vol. 2, p. 168ff., no. 122; Labuda, *Mieszko I*, p. 72ff.; Strzelczyk, *Mieszko Pierwszy*, p. 81ff.

<sup>14</sup> *RGSEO*, vol. 2, p. 169, no. 122; Labuda, *Mieszko I*, pp. 26ff., p. 250; Strzelczyk, *Mieszko I*, p. 93ff.; Oskar Kossmann, “Die Namen der ersten Herrscher Polens und das Lechitenproblem”, *ZfO* 29 (1980), 1–47; Zbigniew Gołąb, “Jak sąsiedzi zachodni nazywali Polaków w połowie X wieku”, *Slavia Occidentalis* 48/49 (1991/1992), 85–92.

<sup>15</sup> *Widukind*, p. 170, (3,66).

<sup>16</sup> Christian Lübke, “Die Elbslawen—Polens Nachbarn im Westen”, in *The Neighbours of Poland in the 10th Century*, ed. Przemysław Urbańczyk (Warszawa, 2000), pp. 61–77, p. 75f.

<sup>17</sup> Ernst Dümmler, “Barbari und Teutonici”, in *Kaiser Otto der Große*, eds. Rudolf Köpke, Ernst Dümmler (Leipzig, 1876), pp. 557–564.

<sup>18</sup> “*longius degentes barbaros crebris preliis contrivit*.”—*Widukind*, p. 170, (3,66).

focused on the fights with the Saxon troops. They took place in 967.<sup>19</sup> Both these notes must have been associated with one another, not only that there is a distance of more less one page between them, but also because they occur in a sort of single logical train of thought describing the final stage in Wichman's life.

However, in 967 the Polish duke was no longer a pagan, as he was earlier, in 963, because in the meantime his baptism, not noticed by Widukind,<sup>20</sup> took place. In addition, Mieszko during his second clash with Wichman was acting as the emperor Otto I's ally, which is, after all, mentioned by the chronicler himself.<sup>21</sup> Yet for Widukind both Mieszko I and his people remained 'barbarians', even though they had not only been baptized but they had also joined the political system under the patronage of the German monarch, which is documented by the title *amicus imperatoris*,<sup>22</sup> attached to the Polish ruler.

Before we begin to suspect the Saxon chronicler of an exceptional unfriendliness towards the Piast and his subjects, let us have a closer look at another source, almost contemporary to Widukind, which referred to the Polish duke and his territorial power—the so called Account by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub: it will supplement our knowledge of the Germans' perception of pagan territories and Central European countries recently put into circulation in the culture of the Latin West. For it seems that the traveller got some basic information on the geography of our region in Magdeburg, at the court of Otto III.

### 1.1.2 *The So-called Account by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub of the Country of Mieszko*

The work of Ibrahim ibn Yaqub is very important for our subject and needs some special attention. Unfortunately, not much is known about the traveller himself, and almost all surviving information concerning him comes from extant scraps of his own account that refers to his expedition.<sup>23</sup> These bits

<sup>19</sup> RGSEO, 2, p. 200ff., no. 144.

<sup>20</sup> None of the sources contemporary to Mieszko I recorded his baptism, which rules out the participation of any top ranking clergymen in this act: Labuda, *Studia nad początkami*, vol. 1, p. 443ff.; Arnold Angenendt, *Kaiserherrschaft und Königstaufe. Kaiser, Könige und Päpste als geistliche Patrone in der abendländischen Missionsgeschichte* (Berlin – New York, 1984), p. 296ff.

<sup>21</sup> Widukind, p. 172 (3,69).

<sup>22</sup> More on this phenomenon: chapter 1.2.2 of this work.

<sup>23</sup> "Ibrāhīm b. Ya'qūb", in *Encyclopedia of Islam. New Edition*, vol. 3 (London, 1971), p. 991. The English edition of the account: *Ibrahim ibn-Ya'qub at-Turtishi's Account of the Slavs from the Middle of the Tenth Century*, ed. Dmitrij Mishin, *Annual of Medieval Studies*

of information suggest that the traveller was born into a Jewish family. He was most likely born in Tortosa on the river Ebro, at that time a Muslim town yet located just by the border with Christian Catalonia.<sup>24</sup> He was probably a merchant by profession, which is indicated by numerous references to trade in his texts that were left after his journey.<sup>25</sup> He is thought to have belonged to relatively well educated people, which is deduced not only from his knowledge of the rudiments of the 'learned' geography, included in the text, but also from the mental acuity of his own observations and his ability to relate them.<sup>26</sup>

The traveller arrived in Germany probably as an envoy of the Omayyad caliph of Cordoba, al-Hakam II (961–976).<sup>27</sup> We do not know the aim of this diplomatic mission. It can be assumed from the message included in the work by al-Qazwīnī<sup>28</sup> that the matter of the translation of an unknown saint from Spanish Lorca to a German centre of cult, which was called for by emperor Otto I, may have been among the most important targets to achieve during the mission. The interest the emperor took in Muslim Spain is confirmed by the passage included in the *Life of John of Gorze* which may not contain the details but still brings some information about the exchange of correspondence between the German ruler and the caliph of Cordoba.<sup>29</sup> We also know

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at the Central European University 1994–95, Budapest 1996, pp. 184–199: unfortunately, this edition does not bring more information than the older one: *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn Ja'kūba do krajów słowiańskich w przekazie al-Bekriego*, ed. Tadeusz Kowalski, *MPH*, 2, 1 (Kraków, 1946)—Arabic, Polish and Latin versions; on the traveller and his account recently: Luboš Kropáček, "Ibrāhīm ibn Ya'qūb", in *Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub at-Tartushi: Christianity, Islam and Judaism meet in East-Central Europe, c. 800–1300 A.D.*, ed. Petr Charvát, Josef Prosecký (Praha, 1996), pp. 52–64; also: Urszula Lewicka-Rajewska, *Arabskie opisanie Słowian. Źródła do dziejów średniowiecznej kultury* (Wrocław, 2004), p. 46ff.

<sup>24</sup> Gerard Labuda, "Ibrahim ibn Yakub", in *LMA* 5, pp. 321–322; Peter Engels, "Der Reisebericht des Ibrāhīm ibn Ya'qūb (961/966)", in *Kaiserin Theophanu. Begegnung des Ostens und Westens um die Wende des ersten Jahrhunderts*, eds. Anton von Euw, Peter Schreiner, vol. I (Köln, 1991), pp. 413–422; André Miquel, *La géographie humaine du monde musulman jusq'au milieu de 11 siècle*, vol. 1. (Paris, 1967), p. 32.

<sup>25</sup> Charlotte Warnke, "Bemerkungen zur Reise Ibrahim ibn Jakubs durch die Slawenländer im 10. Jahrhundert", *Giessener Abhandlungen zur Agrar- und Wirtschaftsforschung des europäischen Ostens* 32 (1965), 393–415, p. 413; see also: Wojciech Swoboda, "Ibrāhīm ibn Ja'kūb", *SSS*, vol. 2 (Wrocław, 1964), pp. 238–9.

<sup>26</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 36ff.; Engels, *Der Reisebericht des Ibrāhīm*, p. 420f.

<sup>27</sup> Miquel, *La géographie humaine*, p. 146; *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 43.

<sup>28</sup> *Arabische Berichte von Gesandten an germanische Fürstenhöfe aus dem 9. und 10. Jahrhundert*, ed. Georg Jacobi, *Quellen zur deutschen Volkskunde* 4.1 (Berlin – Leipzig, 1927), p. 33; also: *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 24f., 38f.; and: Maria Kowalska, "The Sources of al-Qazwīnī's *Āthār al-Bilād*", *Folia Orientalia* 8 (1966), 41–88, p. 76ff.

<sup>29</sup> *Vita Iohannis gorziensis*, ed. Georg H. Pertz *MGH SS IV: Annales, chronica et historiae aevi Carolini et Saxonici* (Hannoverae, 1841), pp. 337–377, p. 369f. (c. 115, 117)—see also: Francisco Fernández, "Die Gesandtschaft des Johannes von Gorze nach Cordoba", in *Otto der*

relatively much about strenuous efforts the emperor made in order to bring over to Saxony, and to Magdeburg in particular, the biggest possible number of relics of the saints.<sup>30</sup> These circumstances justify the mention about the emperor's interest in a Spanish saint. The partly commercial and partly political character of the expedition remains highly hypothetical.<sup>31</sup>

We only know the route of the Arab mission to Germany in outline. It is supposed to have reached Rouen through France and from there—as it is thought—by sea to the country of the Abodrites.<sup>32</sup> The reasons for the selection of such a route are not clear.<sup>33</sup> Quite detailed information about the state of Nacco (the leader of the Abodrites) suggests that the envoy of the caliph of Cordoba stayed among those Slavs for quite a while. Only later did Ibrahim turn up in Magdeburg, the then capital of the state of the Liudolfing dynasty. There a meeting took place between the traveller and emperor Otto I.<sup>34</sup> Later, Ibrahim headed south alongside the Elbe and reached Prague,

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*Große. Magdeburg und Europa*, ed. Matthias Puhle, vol. I: *Essays* (Mainz, 2001), pp. 525–536; Walter Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil im lateinischen Mittelalter*, vol. 4, 1: *Ottonische Biographie. Das hohe Mittelalter 920–1070 n. Chr.*, (Stuttgart, 1999), p. 111ff.

<sup>30</sup> Dietrich Claude, *Geschichte des Erzbistums Magdeburg bis in das 12 Jahrhundert*, vol. I: *Die Geschichte der Erzbischöfe bis an Ruotber (1124)* (Köln, 1972), p. 41ff., 120; Walter Schlesinger, “Zur Geschichte Magdeburger Königspfalz”, in *Beiträge zur Geschichte des Erzbistums Magdeburg*, ed. Franz Schreder, (Leipzig, 1968), pp. 9–43; Hans Brachmann, “Magdeburg im 10. Jahrhundert—St. Adalberts Schuljahre”, in *Tropami Świętego Wojciecha*, ed. Zofia Kurnatowska, Poznań 1999, pp. 37–52.

<sup>31</sup> Ibrahim ibn Yaqub is sometimes thought to have been engaged in slave trade—Zofia Kowalska, “Handel niewolnikami prowadzony przez Żydów w IX–XI wieku w Europie”, in *Niewolnictwo i niewolnicy w Europie od starożytności po czasy nowożytne*, ed. Danuta Quirini—Popławska (Kraków, 1998), pp. 81–91, p. 84; *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 44. Magdeburg was a great centre of trading with Slavic slaves—Johann Hennig, “Gefangenenfesseln im slawischen Siedlungsraum und der europäische Sklavenhandel im 6. bis 12. Jahrhundert”, *Germania* 70 (1992), 403–426; also: Henry Mayr-Harting, “The Church of Magdeburg: its trade and its town in the tenth and early eleventh centuries”, in *Church and city 1000–1500. Essays in honour of Christopher Brooke*, ed. Daria Abulatia, Michael Franklin, Miri Rubin (Cambridge, 1992), pp. 129–150, p. 138f.; Charlotte Warnke, *Die Anfänge des Fernhandels in Polen* (Würzburg, 1964); and: Henryk Samsonowicz, “O dalekim handlu ‘Nowej Europy’ w X wieku”, in ‘*Viae historicae*’. *Księga jubileuszowa dedykowana Profesorowi Lechowi A. Tyszkiewiczowi w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, ed. Mateusz Goliński, Stanisław Rosik (Wrocław, 2001), pp. 473–478; also: Vlastimír Novák, Kateřina Tomková, “Der Handel zwischen West und Ost”, in *Europas Mitte um 1000*, pp. 136–140.

<sup>32</sup> Engels, “Der Reisebericht des Ibrāhīm”, p. 413ff., he thought that the traveller arrived initially in Rome in 961/962, and after that he turned up in Central Europe.; also: Dušan Třeštík, “‘Veliké město Slovanů jménem Praha’. Státy a otroci ve střední Evropě v 10. Století”, in *Přemyslovský stat kolem roku 1000*, eds. Luboš Polanský, Jiří Slamá, Dušan Třeštík (Praha, 2000), pp. 49–70, p. 69.

<sup>33</sup> In Mecklenburg (Slav.: Mechlin) there was a slave trading centre—Hennig, “Gefangenenfesseln im slawischen”, p. 418.

<sup>34</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 41; Engels, “Der Reisebericht des Ibrāhīm”, p. 418.

one of the most important centres of long-range trade in Central Europe of the day.<sup>35</sup> From Bohemia the Jewish traveller probably returned to Germany, where he continued his journey through Fulda, Mainz, and next, following an unknown route through France, he went back to Spain.<sup>36</sup> The arrival of Ibrahim ibn Yaquub in Magdeburg is now dated to the end of 965.<sup>37</sup> The then capital of the Ottonian state seems to have been the ultimate goal of the expedition and the traveller spent there most of his time. For it was only in the meeting with Otto I that traces of the Arab envoy's direct contact with the Central European ruler and conversations with him about the peoples inhabiting the borderland of the Liudolfings' territorial power have been preserved. The authority of 'Hotto, the Roman king' was used by Ibrahim to augment the credibility of his marvellous stories, seemingly also for the traveller, about the Amazonians, female-warriors inhabiting a distant country situated somewhere 'to the west of Prussia'.<sup>38</sup> This remark could have been an incidental interpolation of the author, not any proof of a particular role the emperor and his court played in the mission, had it not been for another message. This is the above-cited passage from the account by Ibrahim which informs us that the 'Roman' emperor took a special interest in the miraculous grave of a Christian saint in Spanish Lorca and the olive tree growing on it, which blossomed at Christmas Eve and bore fruit on the next day, Christmas Day.<sup>39</sup> Besides, the Jewish traveller informs us that in Magdeburg he saw the envoys of the Bulgarian tsar, from whom he took information about their homeland.<sup>40</sup>

The aforementioned circumstances together with some features of the traveller's approach towards geography of the Slavic territories, which will be discussed below, clearly indicate that it was the capital of Otto I's empire

<sup>35</sup> Jarmila Čiháková, Jan Zavřel, "Das Itinerar Ibrahim ibn Jakubs und die neuen archäologischen Entdeckungen auf der Kleinseite", in *Ibrahim ibn Ya'qub*, pp. 65–71.

<sup>36</sup> Warnke, "Bemerkungen zur Reise", p. 403; F. Rörig, *Magdeburgs Entstehung und die ältere Handelsgeschichte*, Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin, Vorträge und Schriften 49 (Berlin, 1952), p. 16f, 21.

<sup>37</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 28ff, Józef Widajewicz, *Studia nad relacją o Słowianach Ibrāhīma ibn Jakuba*, Polska Akademia Umiejętności. Rozprawy Wyzd. Hist.-Filoz. 2, 46, /71/, no. 1 (Kraków, 1946), p. 16ff, see also: Bertold Spuler, "Tadeusz Kowalski, Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn Ja'qūba do krajów słowiańskich w przekazie al-Bekriego, (MPH, 2, 1), Kraków 1946; Józef Widajewicz, *Studia nad relacją o Słowianach Ibrāhīma ibn Jakuba*, (Polska Akademia Umiejętności. Rozprawy Wyzd. Hist.-Filoz. 2, 46, /71/, no. 1), Kraków 1946", *Der Islam. Zeitschrift für Geschichte und Kultur des islamischen Ostens* (1948), 241–243; also: Gerard Labuda, "Ibrahim Ibn Jakub", *RH* 16 (1947), 100–181.

<sup>38</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 50; Miquel, *La géographie humaine*, p. 493ff.

<sup>39</sup> *Arabische Berichte von*, p. 33; *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, pp. 24ff, 38ff.

<sup>40</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 51; Engels, "Der Reisebericht des Ibrāhīm", p. 415.

on the river Elbe where the traveller formed his opinions about the eastern neighbours of Saxony, including the state of Mieszko I. We should remember that at that time Magdeburg was supposed to serve as the centre of the Slavic mission, and that the archbishopric, designed by Otto I, received, according to its status, lavish endowment with, first of all, the territories of the Elbe Slavs conquered by the Saxons.<sup>41</sup> Thus the local Church must have been particularly interested in collecting information about the peoples inhabiting eastern territories, including those relatively remote ones—after all we know that in 962 Adalbert, one of Otto I's chaplains and the first archbishop of Magdeburg (968–981), was assigned a mission by the emperor and he reached the remote territory of Rus' in 962.<sup>42</sup> Another opportunity for the Church people and the circles associated with the emperor's court to get information concerning eastern lands was created by the great Magdeburg marketplace, which was visited by merchants even from distant edges of Europe.<sup>43</sup>

The problem of the analysis of the text which documents the expedition of the envoy of the caliph of Cordoba to Central Europe of c. 965 is complicated by the fact that we do not possess its original version,<sup>44</sup> but only a few later and fragmentary copies of the account. The oldest works which quoted the traveller's words date to as late as the 11th century. Despite all this, it is worth dealing with these extant scraps as they seem to illustrate the original content of the traveller's text, and they also bring a lot of information on Mieszko I and his state in its oldest period. The whole description of the country and its ruler is at the same time far more extensive than the short passage in the chronicle of Widukind devoted to the Piast.

The critical analysis of the account by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub should begin with a short presentation of the extant fragments of the text. After all, we do not know for sure whether a separate work written by the traveller himself ever existed,<sup>45</sup> or whether Ibrahim dictated his memories to another author,

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<sup>41</sup> Claude, *Geschichte des Erzbistums*, p. 34; Mayr-Harting, "The Church of Magdeburg", p. 133; Walter Ulmann, "Magdeburg, das Konstantinopel des Nordens. Aspekte von Kaiser- und Papstpolitik bei der Gründung des Magdeburger Erzbistums 968", *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* 21 (1972), 1–44, p. 3ff.

<sup>42</sup> Claude, *Geschichte des Erzbistums*, p. 122f.

<sup>43</sup> Mayr-Harting, "The Church of Magdeburg", p. 138ff.

<sup>44</sup> We can find there many information about Western Europe—*Arabische Berichte von*, p. 22f.

<sup>45</sup> Tadeusz Lewicki—an expert on the problem—had no doubts that there had been an account handwritten by this traveller and preserved in four works, apart from the above mentioned ones also in the texts: by Ibn Sa'd from the 13th century (the text derivative from the older known accounts) and by al-Himyari from the 15th century (which includes certain

or authors, for example writers at the court of the caliph of Cordoba, the promoter of the expedition.<sup>46</sup> These questions, however, will be of no significance for this analysis, so to make things easier—having in mind the conventionality of this term—we will simply write about the ‘account’ or ‘tradition’ by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub.

Our traveller is cited by later Arab geographers, of whom the most relevant ones are: Al-Bekri, writing in the 11th century,<sup>47</sup> and Al-Qazwīnī of the 13th century.<sup>48</sup> Out of their works, which are the compilations of earlier authors, one can retrieve certain passages which directly stem from—as it seems likely—the lost original source. Apart from this, a small, separate excerpt of the account by the Jewish traveller is included in the dictionary by Al-Al-Himyarī, another Arab geographer.<sup>49</sup>

The most comprehensive text of the whole literary legacy of Ibrahim ibn Yaqub, concerning Slav lands and the country of Mieszko I, has been preserved in the description of the world written by Al-Bekri. This source is known from later copies, which is why it required reconstruction. The most important one so far was carried out by Tadeusz Kowalski more than half a century ago.<sup>50</sup> Thanks to his efforts, the account is so complete and valuable that it can be regarded as an independent, the most prominent source, and it will form the base of our analysis.

The description of the country of Mieszko I written by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub is not a separate work but it is part of a wider narration. It may therefore reveal its different meanings only when we compare it with what the caliph of Cordoba’s envoy wrote on other territories.

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original passages)—Tadeusz Lewicki, “Znajomość krajów i ludów Europy u pisarzy arabskich IX i X wieku”, *SA* 8 (1961), 61–124, p. 67. At present more texts are known to contain the excerpts of the account by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub. However, none of these accounts gives us more information on Slavic matters: Třeštík, “Veliké město Slovanů”, p. 68f.

<sup>46</sup> The matter is not that relevant from our point of view, therefore we apply the general term ‘report’ or ‘account’ by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub and only specify its version when needed.

<sup>47</sup> Tadeusz Lewicki, “al-Bekri”, *SSS*, vol. I (Wrocław, 1961), p. 101: this author lived in 1040–1094, his work being: *Kitāb al-masālik wa’l-mamālik* (The Book of Roads and of Kingdoms), written around 1068; see also: Engels, “Der Reisebericht des Ibrāhīm”, p. 414.

<sup>48</sup> C. 1203–1283—Engels, “Der Reisebericht des Ibrāhīm”, p. 414 see: *Arabische Berichte von*, p. 22f. (about the state of Mieszko I).

<sup>49</sup> Tadeusz Lewicki, “Opis Pragi w arabskim słowniku geograficznym al-Himjariego (XV wiek)”, *Archeologia Polski* 16 (1971), pp. 695–700; Třeštík, “Veliké město Slovanů”, p. 69.

<sup>50</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*—unfortunately, it is not very popular, which is confirmed, e.g. by: *Studies on Ibrāhīm Ibn Ya’qūb (2nd half 10th century) and on his account of eastern Europe*, Islamic Geography vol. 159, ed. Fuat Sezgin (Frankfurt a.M., 1994); this edition lacks any references to the work and translation by Tadeusz Kowalski.



At the very beginning of this ‘Slavic’ sequence, which was typical of Arab geography before the 11th century,<sup>51</sup> we get some remarks concerning the ethnic unity of the Slavs. The author included them among the successors of Madai, son of Japhet (Gn. 10,2). Beginning the genealogy of contemporary peoples with biblical patriarchs was typical not only of the mediaeval European historiography but also of the Arab one, likewise including the Slavs among the descendants of Japhet.<sup>52</sup> We cannot be certain whether indeed this excerpt was written by Ibrahim ibn Yaquub. It is only the next passage, where the vastness of the territories inhabited by the Slavs and their multitude are noticed, which is original. Here, Ibrahim listed four territorial powers which were ruled by their own ‘kings’: Bulgaria, the country of Nacco (leader of the Abodrites),<sup>53</sup> the state of Boleslav (Bohemia),<sup>54</sup> and the country of Mieszko (Poland). Even though the traveller knew a lot about Rus’, he did not include it among the Slavic states, perhaps because he was aware of its contemporary ruling elite’s Norman origin.<sup>55</sup>

It is easily noticeable that this description arranges the Slavic rulers consecutively within the space constructed by the author. The west is taken by ‘king’ of the Abodrites, Nacco; the north by Mieszko; the south by Bohemian Boleslav, while the east belongs to the Bulgarian monarch, with whom the author was, perhaps, the least familiar and therefore he has no name here.<sup>56</sup> It is clear that such a composition, which placed the described Slavic countries at the four edges of the world, formed a certain intellectual structure. The rulers mentioned on this occasion—though the traveller realizes the existence of other Slavic territorial powers, e.g. the Veleti—apparently represented, in his opinion, the entire Slavic population.

It is of some significance and attracts attention that Ibrahim ibn Yaquub applied the above indicated system only with reference to the description of Slav lands. He did not make even a single attempt to characterize more deeply any other country—even in the case of Germany we only encounter some loose impressions e.g. on geographical features of the territories

<sup>51</sup> Urszula Lewicka-Rajewska, “The Slavs of Central Europe and the Muslim world until the beginning of the 10th century A.D. in the light of the Arabic written sources”, in *Origins of Central Europe*, ed. Przemysław Urbańczyk (Warsaw, 1997), pp. 213–225; also: Elżbieta Orłowska, *Geografia regionalna w kulturze arabsko-muzułmańskiej VIII–XIV w.* (Wrocław, 2000) p. 109f.

<sup>52</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 56; Grabski, *Polska w opiniach*, p. 134ff.

<sup>53</sup> Christian Lübke, “Nakon”, in *LMA* 6, p. 1009.

<sup>54</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 48—Stanisław Rospond, “Fraganeo=\*Prag-jane”, *Slavica Pragensia* 8 (1966), pp. 177–186, see also: Třeštík, “Veliké město Slovanů”, p. 293f., note no. 47.

<sup>55</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 48:—see also: Widajewicz, *Studia nad relacją*, p. 84ff.

<sup>56</sup> Widajewicz, *Studia nad relacją*, p. 93ff.

the traveller went through. This phenomenon may have, of course, different explanations—e.g. by the interest the author took in the areas where slaves were obtained—more accurate seems to be, however, the argument that our informer simply received a ready-made notional pattern in Magdeburg to be used in the description of Central Europe. The scheme preserved in the account is of explicitly academic nature, typical of European geography of the day, which very much appreciated all well-rounded structures, even if they did not match what could be observed.<sup>57</sup>

Also, other features of the description and the characteristic of the Slavic countries show that the caliph of Cordoba's envoy made use of the ways of building narration which were applied in academic works by mediaeval European geographers. More precisely, after a certain territory was highlighted, usually by mentioning the name of its ruler and neighbours, the traveller tried to identify the most significant features of a given country. Such a method of description, i.e. determining the object and reducing the complexity of its character to its most fundamental attributes, was generally typical of all mediaeval learned conceptualizations. Thus the author knew of Bulgaria, first of all, that it was located in the east and that its ruler was exceptionally dignified and possessed a splendid court. Moreover, he noticed that the subjects of this ruler were Christians who translated the Holy Bible into a Slavonic language.<sup>58</sup> The traveller reported on the duchy of Nacco that it was located in the western part of Slav lands and was separated from the Germans by marshes, as well as by dense forests, and that it abounded in horses and weapons. He also described quite precisely the methods which the locals applied to build their strongholds.<sup>59</sup>

Bohemia, located in the south of Slav lands, was devoted more attention in the account under discussion than the land of the Abodrites or Bulgaria. On a par with his alleged first job as a merchant, the traveller observed with curiosity the huge centre of commerce, which Prague was at that time, at least on the local scale of Central Europe of the day. He gave a relatively precise account of the commodities available on the local markets, their prices, and

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<sup>57</sup> Arnold Bühler, "Imago Mundi. Bilder aus der Vorstellungswelt des Mittelalters", *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 41 (1990), 457–488, p. 462ff.; Georg Jostkleigrewe, "Zwischen symbolischer Weltdeutung und ergahrungsbasierter Raumdarstellung. Die Geographie des europäischen Raumes", *AfK* 91 (2009), 259–295; see also: Brygida Kürbis, "Kształtowanie się pojęć geograficznych o Słowiańszczyźnie w polskich kronikach przeddługoszkowych", *SA* 4 (1953), 252–282, p. 266ff.

<sup>58</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 51 more about the question: Jan Leśny, *Konstantyn i Metody. Apostołowie Słowian, dzieło i jego losy* (Poznań, 1987), p. 82ff.

<sup>59</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 48.

the currencies in use. He even noticed long-distance commercial connections of the capital of the Premyslid dynasty.<sup>60</sup>

The aforementioned examples indicate that, on the one hand, the caliph of Cordoba's envoy applied a certain template appearing in 'scholarly' geographical descriptions of the time. On the other hand, however, he used his own experience, and conversations with the people he met, which is proven by the mentions of interviewing Otto, or the Bulgarian envoys. It is noticeable that Ibrahim ibn Yaqub aimed to record the biggest possible amount of his empirical experience. It is clearly seen in his observations of nature,<sup>61</sup> people's appearance,<sup>62</sup> or their customs.<sup>63</sup>

This inclination, however, may not have been significant in the case of those passages in Ibrahim ibn Yaqub's work which are the most interesting for us, that is what he wrote on the Poland of Mieszko I, because the traveller never got, as it seems, to the country of the Piasts.<sup>64</sup> Nevertheless, this part of the text is the most important for our work, so we will devote more time to discussing it.

Already at the beginning of our sequence, we encounter a report that the country of the Poles is the largest of all Slavic territories, and the Piast ruler himself is called 'king of the North' there. The description also brings a concise outline of the borders of the state of Mieszko through identifying its neighbours: Rus' is in the east, the country of the Prussians in the north, the territory in control of the Veleti, including a great centre of the trade of the time, Wolin.<sup>65</sup> Somewhere in the mythical space to the west of the Prussians and to the east of the Veleti, according to Ibrahim, lay the state of the Amazons.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>60</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 49.

<sup>61</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, pp. 52, 53; see: *Arabische Berichte von*, p. 28f.

<sup>62</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 49; commentary: Kazimierz Stołyhwo, "Uwagi w sprawie typu antropologicznego spotykanego w Czechach", in: *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, pp. 129–130.

<sup>63</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 51ff.

<sup>64</sup> See: Widajewicz, *Studia nad relacją*, p. 79ff.

<sup>65</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 50; about Wolin: Władysław Filipowiak, *Wollin—ein frühmittelalterliches Zentrum an der Ostsee* (Stuttgart, 2000); Władysław Filipowiak-H. Gundlach, *Wolin Vineta: die tatsächliche Legende vom Untergang und Aufstieg der Stadt* (Rostock, 1992); Gerard Labuda, "Wolinianie—plemię pomorskie czy wieleckie", in *Studia nad etnogenezą Słowian i kulturą Europy wczesnośredniowiecznej*, vol. 2, ed. Gerard Labuda, Stanisław Tabaczyński (Wrocław, 1988), pp. 65–76; also: Jürgen Petersohn, *Der südliche Ostseeraum im kirchlich-politischen Kräftspiel der Reiches, Polens und Dänemarks vom 10. bis 13. Jahrhundert. Mission-Kirchenorganisation-Kultpolitik* (Köln-Wien 1979), p. 38ff.

<sup>66</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 50; about the question of Amazons: Tadeusz Lewicki, "Arabskie legendy o kraju Amazonek na północy Europy", *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiel-*

The traveller noticed an exceptional profusion of arable land and farm produce in the country under Mieszko's rule. Yet the most striking element in Ibrahim's story about the power of the Piasts is his famous description of the Slavic duke's troops (*družhina*) and the foundations of their existence, the most detailed of all the mediaeval accounts known to us.<sup>67</sup> It is noteworthy that such an extended military tone prevails in Ibrahim's characterization of the state of Mieszko I; it is only supplemented by the reports of the fertility of Polish land.

The account by the Jewish traveller cannot be fully investigated unless we make an attempt to understand its origin, the archetypes which shaped the descriptions of the learned geography of the time, or simply the then widespread and classically-based cultural foundations for the conceptualization of geographical space. At the same time we shall leave aside the whole area of intricacy of the text analysis, which is a consequence of a different nature of the Arab civilization, including the linguistic side of the problem. This will be done not only because we do not possess any factual knowledge in this matter. In fact, we trust that at the level of the analysis we undertake here, it suffices to draw on works already written by orientalists. After all, we are discussing a text which has a relatively permanent, well-established interpretation. The most important reason, however, giving us the opportunity to ponder over the problem is—justified by the source—the premise that the fundamentals of the content of the account by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub come either from his interlocutors from the German territory (partially, perhaps, from Bohemia) or from a transformation of the geographical erudition of antiquity, which will be argued below.

If we attempted, after these reservations, to probe more deeply into the properties of the description of the Polish country we would encounter some serious difficulties. Even the meaningful yet succinct naming of Mieszko I as 'king of the North', which appears at the beginning of this passage in the account by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub, cannot be easily explained—that is why this term has never been commented on, despite the fact that even this reader who is not much acquainted with geography can notice that the Piast state lay by no means directly to the north of Magdeburg, or even of our traveller's Spanish homeland. Admittedly, one can assume that Ibrahim ibn Yaqub got

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*łońskiego* 13 (1957), 283–307; see also: Patrick Geary, *Women at the Beginning. Origin Myths from the Amazons to the Virgin Mary* (Princeton – Oxford, 2006).

<sup>67</sup> František Graus, "Die Entstehung der mittelalterlichen Staaten in Mitteleuropa", *Historica* 10 (1965), pp. 5–65; Paweł Zmudzki, "Najemnicy na Rusi i w krajach sąsiednich w X–XII w.", *KH* 111 (2004), pp. 5–28.

the information on the country of the Poles from somebody with whom he talked in Prague and then the territorial power of the Piasts can be located to the north of the territories of the Premislids, but the source itself indicates Magdeburg rather than Prague as the place to recruit informers. Moreover, the properties of cultural foundations of geography of the time suggest another interpretation of the usage of the word ‘North’ in the analyzed text, which is further discussed below.

### 1.1.3 *Archetype of the ‘Savage Slav’—a Dweller of the North*

Firstly, let us consider the fact that it was quite common in the practice of the so-called anthropological (cultural) geography, and sometimes still is, to make stereotyped associations—occasionally in contradiction with the facts—between geographical territories, or parts of the world, and some features which were supposed to distinguish these areas.<sup>68</sup> That happened also in mediaeval Europe, where it became commonplace to associate the term ‘North’ not with real geography but with the perception and categorization of the nature of the peoples inhabiting, in fact or allegedly, this part of the world.

The easiest way to trace this phenomenon in mediaeval sources is to look for it in the narratives referring to missions. This is where the term ‘North’ was consistently applied to describe the area where pagans lived, even if in reality they inhabited, in relation to the homeland of the author, territories other than the north. Apart from paganism, some additional features, at that time associated with the ‘North’, included the primitive nature of its dwellers, their warlike spirit, sometimes cruelty, or some other, rather pejorative attributes. The North was perceived as a foggy, alien, inaccessible, and exceptionally terrifying country.<sup>69</sup> This matter is so interesting that we cannot limit ourselves to enumerating a few general remarks. Only after discovering some nuances, which are connected with the outlining of the borders of this ‘North’ by western European intellectual circles, will we be able to interpret more comprehensively the meaning of the term applied to the

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<sup>68</sup> Hans Lemberg, “Zur Entstehung des Osteuropabegriffs im 19. Jahrhundert. Vom ‘Norden’ zum ‘Osten’ Europas”, *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* 33 (1985), 48–91 in his interpretation the author is slightly superficial, writing (p. 50), that one can find the statement ‘schon im 16. Jahrhundert’ that Russia lies in northern Europe; see also: Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*, pp. 4, 13, 91, 141, 156, 204.

<sup>69</sup> Fraesdorf, *Der barbarische Norden*; see also: Allan A. Lund, “Die Erfindung Germaniens und die Entdeckung Skandinaviens in Antike und Mittelalter”, in *‘Ultima Thule’. Bilder des Nordens von der Antike bis zur Gegenwart*, ed. Annelore Engel-Braunschmidt, Gerhard Fouquet, Michael von Hinden (Frankfurt am Main, 2001), pp. 29–45.

territorial power of Mieszko I, not only in the work by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub, but also by Widukind.

Therefore, let us take a closer look at the origin and meaning of the idea of associating the orientation of the world with the assessment of the value of certain peoples in terms of the level of their civilization. We know from literature that this idea did not appear in the Middle Ages, and it has an older origin, rooted in antiquity. Already for the inhabitants of ancient Greece, it was the Thracians who were named the people of the 'North'. Later, however, as a matter of fact permanently, the Greeks, as their geographical horizons widened, associated the Scythians with the inhabitants of this part of the world. At the same time this term was eagerly applied to all poorly-known peoples of the 'barbarian' North, no matter whether the people under consideration belonged to this ethnic group or not.<sup>70</sup> In ancient sources Scythia (like Thrace before) became the proverbial country of cold. It also used to happen that the Scythians were associated with legendary Hyperboreans, whose settlements were located as far as the northern edges of Europe, by the shores of the so called 'North Sea'.<sup>71</sup> All the peoples of the north were characterized as 'barbarians', they were criticized for savage customs, cruelty, and the lack of any polish. This understanding of the 'Scythian' North was taken over from the Greeks by Roman intellectuals, and it was later in use among some mediaeval authors.

In the 10th century, there were two areas on the eastern edges of Latin civilization where interests were expressed in missions among Central European peoples. The southern with the archdiocese in Salzburg is less important from our point of view as there are no clear traces of its contacts with the Piast state of the day.<sup>72</sup> The other is the northern—Saxon, represented in particular by the Archbishopric of Hamburg (established in 831),<sup>73</sup> as well as—what is more significant from our perspective—the Archbishopric of Magdeburg (in existence from 968). Already at the beginning of the activities of those centres, which is noticeable, the whole missionary area was in

<sup>70</sup> Edward Zwolski, *Kasjodor i Jordanes. Historia gocka czyli scytyjska Europa* (Lublin, 1984), p. 15ff.; p. 40f.

<sup>71</sup> Piotr Kochanek, *Die Vorstellung vom Norden und der Eurozentrismus. Die Auswertung der patristischen und mittelalterlichen Literatur* (Mainz, 2004), p. 45ff.; Christian Hünemörder, "Boreas", in: *Der neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike*, vol. 2, ed. Hubert Cancik, Helmuth Schneider (Stuttgart, 1997), p. 748f.

<sup>72</sup> The archbishopric of Bavaria tended to channel its activities into the Alpine Slavs, Pannonia, and originally the Czechs—see e.g.: *Der heilige Method. Salzburg und Slawenmission—Zum 1100. Todestag des hl. Method*, ed. Theodor Piffel-Perčević (Wien – Innsbruck, 1987).

<sup>73</sup> Rolf Sprandel, "Hamburg", *LMA* 4, p. 1883f.

the works written there termed the ‘North’, and it consisted of the countries which were inhabited by the Scandinavians (the Danes, Swedes, but also the northern Saxons), and the Elbe Slavs.<sup>74</sup> The expression ‘North’ itself—*partes aquilonis*, or in abbreviation *aquilo*, became a technical term for the whole missionary area of the Saxon archdioceses.<sup>75</sup> Between the 10th and 12th centuries the borders of this zone of the ‘North’, not omitting by any means the above-mentioned peoples, expanded in the north as far as Greenland, Iceland, the Faeroe Isles, the Orkney Isles, Norway, and the territories inhabited by Finnish tribes. However, in the eastern part of Europe, which is especially important to us, the ‘North’ so perceived also applied to Poland, as well as to the territories of the Balts and Eastern Slavs.<sup>76</sup>

Thus, it is clearly noticeable that in the 10th century, under discussion here, Saxon intellectual milieux drew a clear distinction between the West, civilized by Christianity, and the ‘barbarian’ and pagan territories. The demarcation line ran along the border of Denmark, up the Elbe, and further to the south, coinciding with the German border. Next it went through Lusatia, leaving the Polish territory outside the area of the civilization so marked. Despite the progress made in the Christianization process in the east, the existence of a strong division of this kind is observable until, at least, the beginning of the 12th century.<sup>77</sup> All the historical works which were written in Germany before the 12th century and referred in a sense to this ‘North’ notice the aforementioned delimitation, and their authors ascribe the same characteristics to the peoples living outside the sphere of their own ‘civilized’ Christian world as previously the Greeks and Romans saw in the Scythians.

There is no room here for detailed commentaries on this phenomenon, yet it will be well justified to take a closer look at some, selected examples which describe the attitude of writers of the Christian West towards the peoples

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<sup>74</sup> See e.g.: Rimbart, *Vita Anskarii*, AQDGM 11: *Quellen des 9. und 11. Jahrhunderts zur Geschichte der Hamburgischen Kirche und des Reiches. Rimbart Leben Ansgars. Adam von Bremen, Bischofsgeschichte der Hamburger Kirche. Wipo Taten Kaiser Konrads II*, ed. Werner Trillmich (Darmstadt, 1978), pp. 43–48 (c. 12–13). The text was written c. 865–875 by archbishop Rimbart of Hamburg and contained the life of the author’s predecessor—Ansgar, who took part in the mission—see: Lutz E. von Padberg, *Die Christianisierung Europas im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 1998), p. 112f.; also: Ian Wood, *The Missionary Life. Saints and the Evangelisation of Europe, 400–1050* (Harlow, 2001), p. 125ff.

<sup>75</sup> Vegard Skånland, “Calor fidei”, *Symbolae Osloenses* 32 (1956), 86–104, p. 98: *The term partes aquilonis as a designation for the Scandinavian countries is near to officially acknowledged.*

<sup>76</sup> *Magister Adam Bremensis, Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*, AQDGM 11, p. 358, (3,24), p. 458ff. (4,20–24.); *Helmoldi Presbyteri Bozoviensis, Chronica Slavorum*, AQDGM 19, ed. Heinz Stoob (Berlin, 1963), pp. 137–499, p. 304 (1,86).

<sup>77</sup> Fraesdorf, *Der barbarische Norden*, p. 179ff.

of the 'North'. Such a review will allow us to understand Widukind's view of Mieszko I in a wider context, as well as the expression used by Ibrahim ibn Yaqub.

*Vita Anskarii* written c. 870 by Rimbart, archbishop of Hamburg and Bremen is the oldest example of a Saxon source we are acquainted with where the term 'North' was applied to name the pagan world. It is he who described the life and missionary activities of his predecessor on the archbishopric throne, Ansgar.<sup>78</sup> According to the religious and cultural division of Europe in the 9th century, this author outlines two spheres of the world of the time: one, his own, Christian and civilized, is the world subjected to God's authority. This was contrasted in *Vita Anskarii* with some other areas—murky, inhabited by savage, cruel pagans, who remained under the dominion of the Devil. Rimbart consequently calls the dwellers of the North either *barbari* or *pyratae*. The author uses these terms every time he wants to describe the cruelty of pagan peoples. However, if he writes about the missionary work among them he usually applies the term *gentes*.<sup>79</sup> It is noticeable that, probably, the distance and alienation from pagans, in this case the Scandinavians and Slavs, originated primarily in religion.

The prejudices against the inhabitants of the 'North' were sometimes so strong that when it came to meeting them they predominated over observed experience. A good example of such practice is formed by an excerpt from the life of Saint Sturm, the founder and first abbot of the Benedictine monastery and abbey of Fulda between 744 and 779.<sup>80</sup> There we read that the Frankish missionary, usually working among the Saxons—of whom, after all, his chronicler, Eigil, did not think highly as he called them 'the people possessed by devils from the origin of the world'<sup>81</sup>—encountered accidentally,

<sup>78</sup> Walther Lammers, "Ansgar", *LMA* vol. 1, pp. 690–691; Wood, *The Missionary Life*, p. 123ff.

<sup>79</sup> Rimbart, *Vita Anskarii*, p. 46 (cap. 12): *Et quia diocesis illa in periculosis locis fuerat constituta, ne propter barbarorum imminentem saevitiam aliquo modo deperiret [...]*; p. 70 (c. 22): *[...] quia dioecesis illa, ad quam ipse ordinatus fuerat, admodum parva erat—nam nonnisi quattuor baptismales habebat ecclesias—et haec ipsa multotiens iam barbarorum incurSIONIBUS devastata, ista ei causa solacii adiungeretur*; similarly: p. 72ff (c. 23); p. 122 (c. 40).

<sup>80</sup> Johannes Fried, "Fulda in der Bildungs- und Geistesgeschichte des früheren Mittelalters", in *Kloster Fulda in der Welt der Karolinger und Ottonen*, Fuldaer Studien 7, ed. Gangolf Schrimpf, (Frankfurt a.M., 1996), pp. 3–38, p. 17, note 63, p. 20; also: Richard E. Sullivan, "The Carolingian Missionary and the Pagan", in *Christian Missionary Activity in the Early Middle Ages* (Aldershot – Burlington, 2003), pp. 705–740, p. 715ff.

<sup>81</sup> "[Saxonum]... gentem quae ab initio mundi daemnonum vinculis fuerat obligata..."—*Eigilis Vita Sancti Sturmi*, ed. Georg Pertz, MGH SS, vol. 2, Hannoverae 1829, p. 376 (c. 23); the newer edition: "Eigil: Das Leben des Abtes Sturmi", ed. Pius Engelbert O.S.B., *Fuldauer Geschichtsblätter. Zeitschrift des Fuldauer Geschichtsvereins* 56 (1980), 17–48, p. 45.



somewhere in the borderland, a ‘large group of the Slavs’<sup>82</sup> who were bathing there. This incident happened after Sturm’s journey of several days across the wilds, where he was threatened by wild beasts. The missionary, however, ‘God’s man’, was not used to feeling fear. He did not get frightened until he saw, and smelled in particular, the bathing Slavs. Even his horse trembled, as the scrupulous author of the life informs the reader, for fear of meeting the naked ‘savages’. Those in turn, ‘according to the customs of pagans’, (*more gentiliū*) began to deride the ‘holy man’. They would have probably attacked him had it not been for God’s mercy, which saved the missionary from oppression. The author finishes the story with these words: ‘Thus God’s man continued his lonely journey across the wilds and he did not see any [life], apart from wild animals, which were there plentiful’.<sup>83</sup> The group of the bathing Slavs whom he encountered was incorporated by Eigil into the world inhabited by beasts.

It seems that this description is an ordinary ‘anecdote taken from life’, in fact it includes, in their condensed form, basic archetypes usually associated with ‘Northern’ pagans, and in a wider context—with all ‘savages’.<sup>84</sup> What turns out to be most surprising in this story, i.e. the bad smell of the bathing people, not of the missionary, weary from a few days journey, is obvious from the point of view of the Christian writer: a holy man always exudes nothing but fragrance from his body. Miracles are full of reports of pleasant in most cases violet fragrance of the bodies of the dead saints whose coffins were opened to get some relics.<sup>85</sup>

Traditional thinking is often based on contradictions: so because holiness smells beautiful, pagans must smell bad in every situation. Similarly archetypical seem to be other traits which distinguish the Slavs in the description by Eigil: the nudity of their bodies, their large number, even though they inhabited the wilderness, and, which is this time obvious, their wildness.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *magnam Sclavorum multitudinem—Eigilis Vita Sancti Sturmi*, p. 369, (c. 7); “Eigil: Das Leben”, p. 26.

<sup>83</sup> *Sicque vir Dei per horrendum solus pergens desertum, praeter bestias, quarum ingens in eo fuit abundantia [...] nihil cernens [...]*—*Eigilis Vita Sancti Sturmi*, p. 369, (c. 8); “Eigil: Das Leben”, p. 27.

<sup>84</sup> In fact, even to-day popular culture uses similar images of ‘savages’: they are naked and numerous.

<sup>85</sup> Arnold Angenendt, *Heilige und Reliquien. Die Geschichte ihres Kults vom frühen Christentum bis zur Gegenwart* (München, 1994), p. 119ff; Anna Adamska, “Zapach dobra i odor zła”, *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 39 (1996), 31–46.

<sup>86</sup> The archetype of naked savages is also visible in the reference by Brun of Querfurt on the battle of Otto II with the Saracens—*S. Adalberti Vita altera, auctore Brunone Querfurtensi*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasińska, MPH—s.n., t. IV, fasc. 2. (Warszawa, 1969), p. 50, (c. 10).

Although the initiative of dividing the world into the 'southern' zone of civilization (in fact this was the only part to be called 'Europe')<sup>87</sup> and the 'northern', the domain of barbarians, is rooted in antiquity, this concept remained in perfect harmony with dualistic schemes eagerly used in all sorts of mediaeval ideas, whose foundation lay in the division of the world, or even the universe, into the part under God's protection, being the base for the state of the redeemed—Heavenly Jerusalem, and the other community: the damned, hellish Babylon, remaining under the dominion of the Devil.<sup>88</sup>

How significant and meaningful this division was for mutual relations, even everyday ones, among people is shown for instance in a passage from the 'Legend of St. Wenceslas by Kristian' (the end of the 10th century), where there is a description how the Czech duke, Borivoj was received at the court of the Great Moravian ruler, Svatopluk. The Premyslid, still a pagan, was not allowed to sit at the table together with feasting Christians, but he was given food to be eaten on the floor, in front of the table.<sup>89</sup> Similar treatments, on a par with dogs—as some sources remark, which pagan aristocrats received at Christian courts, are described in other accounts.<sup>90</sup> Even if this is only a topos<sup>91</sup> instead of a report of real practices, stories of this sort tell us, in any case, a lot about the attitude of Christians towards pagans at that time.

<sup>87</sup> In the Carolingian times the borders of Europe were marked by the area of the Carolingian influences—Klaus Koch, *Europa, Rom und der Kaiser vor dem Hintergrund von zwei Jahrtausenden Rezeption des Buches Daniel*, Hamburg 1997, p. 82; as regards the perception of the Continent in cultural terms: Denis Hay, *Europe. The Emergence of an Idea* (Edinburgh, 1957); such understanding of its borders prevailed also in Germany—Helmuth Beumann, "Unitas ecclesiae—unitas imperii—unitas regni. Von der imperialen Reichseinheitsidee zur Einheit der regna", in *Augewählte Aufsätze aus den Jahren 1966–1986. Festgabe zu seinem 75. Geburtstag*, eds. Johann Petersohn, Roderick Schmidt (Sigmaringen, 1987), pp. 3–43, p. 41.

<sup>88</sup> Karl Hauck, "Die religionsgeographische Zweiteilung des frühmittelalterlichen Europas im Spiegel der Bilder seiner Gottheiten", *Fornvännan* 82 (1987), 161–183; Arnold Angenendt, *Das Frühmittelalter. Die abendländische Christenheit von 400 bis 900* (Stuttgart, 1995), p. 427.

<sup>89</sup> *Legenda Christiani. Vita et passio Sancti Wenceslai et Sanctae Ludmille ave eius*, ed. Josef Ludvikovský (Praha, 1976), p. 18 (c. 2).

<sup>90</sup> *Conversio Bagoarorum et Carantanorum*, ed. Herwig Wolfram (Wien – Köln – Graz, 1979) p. 46, 101f.; *Staročeská Kronika tak řečeného Dalimila*, ed. Jiří Daňhelka, Karel Hádek, Bohuslav Havránek, Naděžda Kvitková, vol. 1., *Texty a studie k dějinám českého jazyka a literatury* 4/1 (Praha, 1988), p. 25—see also: Gerard Labuda, "Książna Dobrawa i książę Mieszko jako rodzice chrzestni Polski Piastowskiej", in *Scriptura custos memoriae. Prace Historyczne*, ed. Danuta Zydorek (Poznań, 2001), pp. 3–17, p. 14f.

<sup>91</sup> The table (*mensa*) was associated with the altar, and the common feast—with the holy communion, thus probably the idea to forbid non-Christians to access it, even for secular purposes: Bonnie Effros, *Creating Community with Food and Drink in Merovingial Gaul*, Houndmills 2002, p. 9ff. *passim*.

During the following centuries similar tendencies could also be observed in European anthropological geography, which were revealed in writing on different occasions.<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, Thietmar of Merseburg, the key chronicler of the times of the Ottonian dynasty, whose stance is important for our presentation, knew the concept of the barbarian ‘North’. This chronicler was, however, slightly less interested in the missionary work among the Scandinavians and Slavs than the previously quoted authors, because he turned his attention principally to political life of his time, in which he himself participated thanks to his lively contacts with Henry II.<sup>93</sup> Nevertheless, the terms which are well known to us can be found in his work. Admittedly, he calls the dwellers of the ‘North’ *barbari* less frequently than others, yet he still does it.<sup>94</sup> Likewise, other words will be found in his work, which are in conformity with the above-mentioned convention: for example, in the opinion of the chronicler of Merseburg all the Scandinavian peoples are simply cruel Vikings. This negative image is in this case understandable when his personal experience is taken into consideration.<sup>95</sup> However, also in Thietmar’s attitude towards the Poles and Liutizians (Veleti) one can sense his cultural and civilizational alienation. The Poles, in his view, ‘are happy when they do evil’,<sup>96</sup> while the Liutizians ‘are always united in doing evil’.<sup>97</sup> At the same time, Thietmar does not use these terms whenever he wants to characterize actions of individuals, but he generalizes in his characterization of the Germans’ eastern neighbours—reporting on, e.g. how ‘a cruel Slav’ ravaged some large areas of Saxony.<sup>98</sup>

<sup>92</sup> Wolff, *Inventing Eastern Europe*.

<sup>93</sup> Annerose Schneider, “Thietmar von Merseburg über kirchliche, politische und ständische Fragen seiner Zeit”, *AfK* 44 (1962), pp. 3–71; Hartmut Hoffmann, *Mönchskönig und ‘rex idiota’*. *Studien zur Kirchenpolitik Heinrichs II. und Konrads II.*, MGH Studien und Texte 8 (Hannover, 1993), pp. 151–176.

<sup>94</sup> Franz-Josef Schröder, *Völker und Herrscher des östlichen Europa im Weltbild Widukinds von Korvei und Thietmars von Merseburg* (Diss. Münster, 1974), p. 117; Dümmler, “Barbari und Teutonici”, p. 559.

<sup>95</sup> In 994 one of his mother’s brothers was killed by the Danes, while the other two were taken prisoners. Originally, young Thietmar was supposed to be handed over to the Vikings as a hostage, but finally he was spared—*Thietmar*, ed. Marian Z. Jedlicki, Poznań 1953, p. 175ff. (4,23–25)—hereafter cited as: *Thietmar*; for the English translation see: *Ottonian Germany. The ‘Chronicon’ of Thietmar of Merseburg*, ed. David A. Warner, Manchester 2001 (hereafter cited as: *The ‘Chronicon’*).

<sup>96</sup> *Letantur, cum male fecerint, ac exultant in rebus pessimis*—*Thietmar*, p. 261, (V, 9); *The ‘Chronicon’*, p. 212.

<sup>97</sup> *In illo tempore Liutici in malo semper unanimes [...]*—*Thietmar*, p. 587, (8,5); *The ‘Chronicon’*, p. 364.

<sup>98</sup> *Maxima pars regni Sclavo vastata crudeli*—*Thietmar*, p. 249, (V, prol.); *The ‘Chronicon’*, p. 205.

Thietmar uses similar assessment criteria as regards both the Slavs and the Scandinavians. Thus, for example the Liutizians and the Vikings are the only communities which happen to be, according to Thietmar, *furore succensi*.<sup>99</sup> It occurred to the chronicler several times to compare these peoples with wild animals, and both the Slavs and the Danes were called by him dogs (*canes*)—which term with reference to pagans had already had a long tradition in the 11th century Christian culture.<sup>100</sup> Equally, the chronicler showed his aversion to the Poles: while describing their customs he estimated them as *inferiores*, and their habits (*consuetudines*) were, in his view, cruel (*dirae*).<sup>101</sup> Of similar meaning is the comparison between the behaviour of the whole people and cattle, or a ‘stubborn donkey’.<sup>102</sup>

An interesting concept behind the motif of the ‘North’ can be found in the Life of St. Wenceslas by Gumpold, the bishop of Mantua (d. 985), where we can observe the idea of God’s plan of redemption.<sup>103</sup> According to this, the peoples located on the peripheries of civilization, on the north, are uncouth and thus naturally worse than the civilized peoples of the ‘South’ from whom the ‘savages’ should derive knowledge and education, even after they have already been baptised.<sup>104</sup> Such a stance would correspond to the views of Thietmar of Merseburg, who expressed a certain moralizing tone towards

<sup>99</sup> *Unde Liutici nimio furore succensi, eum cum omnibus, quas habebant, catervis ilico petebant.—Thietmar, p. 175 (4,22) The ‘Chronicon’, p. 167; About the Normans: Tali furore omnes succensi crastino clericum et nepotem meum cum caeteris obsidibus universis naribus ac auribus et manibus obruncant, foris eos proicientes in portum.—Thietmar, p. 179, (4,25); The ‘Chronicon’, p. 169.*

<sup>100</sup> *Thietmar, p. 133, (3,17): Clerus ibidem capitur, et Dodilo, eiusdem sedis antistes II., qui a suis strangulatus tres annos iacuit tunc sepultus, e tumulo eruitur et, integro adhuc eius corpore ac sacerdotali apparatu, ab avaris canibus predatur et iterum temere reponitur; The ‘Chronicon’, p. 141; similarly: Thietmar, p. 519 (7,36) The ‘Chronicon’, p. 333f.; see commentary: Harald Dickerhof, “Canum nomine gentiles designantur”. Zum Heidenbild aus mittelalterlichen Bibellexika”, in *Secundum regulam vivere*. *Festschrift für Norbert Backmund*, ed. Gert Melville (Windberg, 1978), pp. 41–71, p. 42f.; see Mt 15, 26, and Mr 7, 27: *non est bonum sumere panem filiorum et mittere canibus*.*

<sup>101</sup> *Thietmar, p. 581 (8,2), p. 583: Sunt etiam illi mores alii hiis multo inferiores, qui nec Deo placent nec indigenis nil nisi ad terrorem prosunt; ibid.: In huius sponsi regno sunt multae consuetudines variae; et quamvis dirae, tamen sunt interdum laudabiles; The ‘Chronicon’, p. 361f.*

<sup>102</sup> *Thietmar, p. 581 (8,2); The ‘Chronicon’, p. 362.*

<sup>103</sup> *Gumpoldi Mantuani episcopi Passio Venceslai martyris*, ed. Josef Emmler, *Fontes rerum Bohemiarum I* (Praha, 1873), pp. 146–166.

<sup>104</sup> Jacek Banaszkiwicz, “Gumpold, Vavřinec a Kristián, čili krátce o tom, jak se sněžná a severní Bohemia stávala součástí ‘požehnané’ Evropy”, in *Dějiny ve věku nejistot. Sborník k příležitosti 70. narozenin Dušana Třeštika*, eds. Josef Klápště, Eva Plešková, Josef Žemlička (Praha, 2003), pp. 47–52.

Slavs as well as the conviction of their ‘natural’ civilizational inferiority to the chronicler’s countrymen.<sup>105</sup>

Such a thought would not be found, however, in the writing of another biographer of St. Wenceslas, namely Lawrence of Monte Cassino (11th c.),<sup>106</sup> who did not accept the idea of the new converts’ permanent civilizational deficiency. Even if he also used the motif of snowy ‘pagan’ North, its ice could be melted, in his opinion, by the force of faith. This was achieved by the central figure in the work of Laurentius—the saintly Bohemian duke, who was compared by him to a new titan. Here he emerged from the cold snow of the northern country and rejected the eternal chill of fatal mustiness.<sup>107</sup> We have here not only mentions of cold, but also the motif of bad smell, ‘mustiness’, known from the life of Sturm, which characterized the territory alien to Christian civilization.

Interestingly, it is also the texts written about Slavonic Christianized territories which repeat the archetype of the ‘North’ known to us. For example, the oldest Bohemian sources underline in their early parts where pagan times were described, the northern location of their country, while this thread effectively disappears or becomes forgotten when the narration focuses on Christian times.<sup>108</sup> We can also find the reflection of the concepts, described here, in the writing of Gallus Anonymus, who wrote in Poland at the beginning of 12th century. In his view, the country of the Piasts was slipping out of the ‘North’, the sphere of barbarism. Nevertheless, behind it lay the border at the back of which *three most savage nations of pagan barbarians* bare their teeth.<sup>109</sup> Farther on, beyond those wild areas were uninhabited islands, full of permanent snow and ice.

<sup>105</sup> Lech A. Tyszkiewicz, “Wschodni sąsiedzi Niemiec w historiografii końca X i początków XI stulecia”, *Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny Sobótka* 37 (1982), 1–12.

<sup>106</sup> Ian Wood, “Wojciech-Adalbert z Pragi i Bruno z Kwerfurtu”, in *Tropami Świętego Wojciecha*, pp. 159–168, p. 162; also: Dušan Treštk, “Diskuse k předloze václavské legendy Laurentia z Monte Cassina”, *Listy Filologické* 107 (1984), 85–89.

<sup>107</sup> “...eam beati Wenzeslai laurea robustius quodammodo asserit; qui nuper brumalibus septentrionalis axis nivibus, quasi novus eminens Tytan, cunctum noxii torporis frigis noscitur reppulisse”—“Passio Sancti Wenzeslai Regis”, in *Laurentius Monachis Casinensis Archiepiscopus Amalfitanus Opera*, ed. Francis Newton, MGH 6, vol. 7: Die deutschen Geschichtsquellen des Mittelalters 500–1500, Quellen zur Geistgeschichte des Mittelalters 7 (Weimar, 1973), pp. 23–42, p. 24; commentary: Banaszkiwicz, “Gumpold, Vavřinec a Kristián”, p. 49ff.

<sup>108</sup> *Legenda Christiani*, p. 16 (c. 2); see also: *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum*, ed. Bertold Bretholz, MGH SS NS 2 (Berlin, 1923), pp. 5, 22 (1,9).

<sup>109</sup> *Galli Anonymi Cronica et gesta ducum sive principum Polonorum*, ed. Karol Maleczyński, MPH S. n., vol. 2 (Kraków, 1952), p. 7; For the English translation, see: *Gesta principum Polonorum. The Deeds of the Princes of the Poles*, trans. Paul W. Knoll and Frank Schaer, Central European Medieval Texts 3, series ed. Frank Schaer, general eds. János M. Bak, Urszula Borkowska,

A similar image of the world divided into the part inhabited by civilized people, Christians, and the uncivilized, 'Northern' pagans<sup>110</sup> can be found in the writers of the High Middle Ages, e.g. in Adam of Bremen, the author of *Gesta Hammaburgensis ecclesiae pontificum*. This work was written in c. 1075, and it contains, among others, the motif, already known to us, of the synonymous application of the terms 'North' and *Scythian*. These names were used by Adam of Bremen with reference to the territories around the Baltic Sea.<sup>111</sup> An important part in his considerations was taken by Sweden, that is why for him this country was the centre of the 'Scythian' North so defined.<sup>112</sup> Thietmar, already mentioned here, wrote on Scandinavian peoples in a similar manner. He placed the Danes close to the North Pole, even though he suffered from cold in winter more than them.<sup>113</sup> The Swedes, in turn, compared by him to the Scythians, were meant to live like nomads, drinking mare's milk.<sup>114</sup>

In these expressions one can find a certain parallel between German chroniclers and Gerbert of Aurillac (Pope Sylvester II), who had written before Otto III's expedition to Gniezno about successes in the process of extending the *Imperium Christianum*:

Strength is lent by Italia, rich in fruit, also by Gallia and Germania rich in warriors, and we do not lack valorous countries of the Scythians.<sup>115</sup>

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Giles Constable, Gábor Klaniczay (Budapest – New York, 2003), p. 13f.; *ferocissime nationes barbarorum gentilium*; see also: Banaszkiewicz, "Gumpold, Vavřinec a Kristián", p. 49.

<sup>110</sup> Rudolf Buchner, "Adams von Bremen geistige Anleihen bei der Antike", *Mittellateinisches Jahrbuch* 2 (1965), 96–101, p. 98; Scior, *Das Eigene und das Fremde*, p. 23ff. passim.

<sup>111</sup> *Magister Adam Bremensis*, p. 230 (1,60): *Ad quam stationem, quia tutissima est in maritimis Suevoniae regionibus, solent omnes Danorum vel Nortmannorum itemque Sclavorum ac Semborum naves aliique Scithiae populi pro diversis commerciorum necessitatibus sollempniter convenire*; por. *ibid.*, p. 462 (schol. 130): *Dani, Sueones et Nordmanni et reliqui Scithiae populi a Romanis Yperborei vocantur [...]*.

<sup>112</sup> Archbishop Unni from Hamburg *obiit in Scitia: Magister Adam Bremensis*, p. 234 (2,1): *Quem ferunt etiam doctrina et miraculis celebrem Sclavorum populos eo tempore predicasse, quo noster Unni ad Scythas legatus extitit*; p. 232 (1,62): *Obiit autem peracto boni certaminis cursu in Scitia, ut scribitur [...]*.

<sup>113</sup> Thietmar, p. 521f., (7,37); *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 333.

<sup>114</sup> Thietmar, p. 523, (7,37); *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 334.

<sup>115</sup> Jerzy Strzelczyk, *Otton III* (Wrocław, 2000), p. 105 (*De ratione uti*): *Dant vires ferax frugam Italia, ferax militum Gallia et Germania, nec Scythae nobis desunt fortissima regna*; see: Karol Maleczyński, "Sarmatae i Scytae w pismach Gerberta z Aurillac", in *Europa-Słowiańszczyzna-Polska. Studia ku uczczeniu Profesora Kazimierza Tymienieckiego*, ed. Jerzy Bardach (Poznań, 1970), pp. 59–69; Mathilde Uhlirz, "Die, 'Scythae' in den Briefen Gerberts von Aurillac", *MIÖG* 59 (1951), 411–415.

Otto III's collaborator may have meant the sphere of Rome's influence, which to a certain extent was considered the equivalent of the concept of Europe of that time, regarded as an area free from barbarism, total chaos, and anarchy thanks to Christianity and the divine institution of the Empire.<sup>116</sup>

Opinions of this kind, however, like the ones presented above, were few and far between. Thus, paradoxically, Christianization did not cause the barrier of civilization to disappear, but it only brought about a different perception. We can already observe in the work by Adam of Bremen the motif of dividing the followers of Christ into the peoples of old Christianity: for the author these are true Christians (*christiani*), and those worse ones, not 'well-intentioned', or simply 'malevolent' (*mali christiani*). This latter term is ascribed by our author, first of all, to the Slavs, being newly-baptised and hardly aware of the principles of the faith,<sup>117</sup> who were also devoid of such important Christian, or in general 'human' features, as humanity (*humanitas*), or mercy (*misericordia*).<sup>118</sup>

Treating the Slavs like 'barbarians from the North' turned out, in general, to be relatively long-lasting also in the High Middle Ages, though, of course, the emphasis put on this 'barbarism' varied. Therefore, we can also observe this motif in the work, important for the evaluation of German opinions

<sup>116</sup> Hay, *Europe. The Emergence of an Idea*, p. 32; Karl Leyser, "Concepts of Europe in the Early and High Middle Ages", in *Communications and Power in Medieval Europe. The Carolingian nad Ottonian Centuries*, ed. Timothy Reuter (London, 1994), pp. 1–18, p. 16; see also: Georg Kretschmar, "Der Kaiser tauft. Otto der Große und Slawenmission", in *Bleibendes im Wandel der Kirchengeschichte. Kirchengeschichtliche Studien*, ed. Bernd Noelle (Tübingen, 1973), pp. 102–150; Angenendt, *Kaiserherrschaft und Königstaufe*, p. 274ff.

<sup>117</sup> *Magister Adam Bremensis*, p. 306, (2,66): [...] *tercius Uto, filius Mistiwoi, male christianus*. Similarly: *Widukind* (pp. 88–2, 1), *Accipe, inquit, hunc gladium, quo eicias omnes Christi adversarios, barbaros et malos Christianos* [...]; in the *ordo* which was written in Mainz around 961—slightly transformed by the chronicler: *Le pontifical romano-germanique du dixième siècle*, ed. Cyrille Vogel, Reinhardt Elze, *Studi e testi* 226, vol. 1 (Città Vaticano, 1963), pp. 246–259, p. 255f.—addressed the king as *Defensor ecclesiae*, that is, to do so, it could be called: *auctor ac stabilitor christianitatis et christianae fidei*, which—to simplify the matter—indicated his fight against the infidel, see: Stefan Weinfurter, "Idee und Funktion des 'Sakral-königtums' bei den ottonischen und salischen Herrschern (10. und 11. Jahrhundert)", in *Legitimation und Funktion des Herrschers*, ed. Rolf Gundlach, *Schriften der Meinzer Philosophischen Fakultätsgesellschaft* 13 (Stuttgart, 1992), pp. 99–127, p. 100; see also: Carl Erdmann, *Forschungen zur politischen Ideenwelt des Frühmittelalters* (Berlin, 1951), p. 54ff.; Arnd Reitemier, *Die christliche Legitimation von Herrschaft im Mittelalter* (Münster, 2006), p. 156ff.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. some favourable remarks regarding the Wolinians, who gave shelter to the Danish king Harald the Bluetooth—*Magister Adam Bremensis*, p. 262 (2,28): *contra spem, quia pagani erant, humane receptus*. And reproaching the Norwegian duke for not sparing a fugitive: *quoniam paganus erat, nulla super exulem misericordia motus est*.—*ibid.*, p. 268ff. (2,32/34/).

on the Slavs, by Helmold of Bosau, edited c. 1172.<sup>119</sup> Here the author of the *Chronicle of the Slavs*—born somewhere in central Germany—notices (though as a matter of fact dissociating himself from the quoted views) that the Slavs, even those baptised and of ducal descent, were regarded by some of his fellow countrymen as a people far worse than they themselves. This is proven by the story, cited by the chronicler, about the request which was directed by one of the chieftains of the Abodrites, Billung,<sup>120</sup> at the bishop of Starogard, Wagon (Wegon), for his consent to the chieftain marrying his daughter. This caused a violent reaction from the bishop's inner circle, who stated that it was improper for such a beautiful girl to marry a churl.<sup>121</sup>

Another passage from the work by the priest of Bosau—proving that in fact this was not an isolated case—tells us a more drastic story. Here Mstivoy, the duke of the Vinuli (Abodrites?)<sup>122</sup> allegedly asked the duke of the Saxons, probably Bernhard II, to let him marry his niece, which the latter accepted. Mstivoy, being assured of this contract and marriage, headed with the Saxons to Italy with 1000 mounted warriors. There he lost in battle almost all his people. When he came back from his expedition and demanded his fiancée in return, the margrave Dietrich<sup>123</sup>—who somehow interfered in the whole affair—opposed this saying that a ducal relative should not be given as wife to a dog.<sup>124</sup>

The chronicler, using a similar plot twice and, as a matter of fact, mistaking the timeframe and main characters, must have quoted a certain topos—the story known more widely and spread by word of mouth, for we can find a similar anecdote, set in different historical circumstances, in the work by Adam of Bremen.<sup>125</sup> It is also noticeable that the views discussed here, which ascribed churlishness, primitive nature, and civilizational inferiority

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<sup>119</sup> *Helmoldi Presbyteri Bozoviensis, Chronica Slavorum*, ed. Heinz Stoob, (AQDGM 19), Berlin 1963; see: Stanisław Rosik, *Interpretacja chrześcijańska religii pogańskich Słowian w świetle kronik niemieckich XI–XII wieku: Thietmar, Adam z Bremy, Helmold*, Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis 2235 (Wrocław, 2000), p. 224ff.

<sup>120</sup> The person, as it seems, fictional—see: *Helmolda Kronika Słowian*, ed. Józef Matuszewski, Jerzy Strzelczyk (Warszawa, 1974), p. 121, note no. 182.

<sup>121</sup> *Helmoldi Presbyteri Bozoviensis*, p. 72 (1,13).

<sup>122</sup> *Helmolda Kronika Słowian*, p. 133, note 223; p. 135, note 227; see also: Gerard Labuda, *Fragmety dziejów Słowiańszczyzny Zachodniej*, Poznań 2002, p. 222ff.

<sup>123</sup> The lord of Nordmark († 985).

<sup>124</sup> *Helmoldi Presbyteri Bozoviensis*, p. 86 (1,16).

<sup>125</sup> *Magister Adam Bremensis*, p. 278ff. (2,42 and schol. 27[30]).



in general to the Slavs, were very popular in the whole Christian world of the time.<sup>126</sup>

Getting back to Helmold for a while, let us remark that the Slavs together with the Scandinavians still form in his work this mythical, uncivilized ‘North’,<sup>127</sup> even though it is certain that the author was not particularly prejudiced against them. This fact shows the power of the archetype. Later on, and this would last almost until the present day, the inhabitants of Slavic lands, unlike the Scandinavians, will play a role, depending on the world view of the author, as either evil, cruel savages, supporters of anarchy who thoughtlessly bring destruction to everything which is even slightly civilized,<sup>128</sup> or—according to other concepts—these ‘savage Slavs’ will be transformed into ‘peaceful farmers’, unblemished by the evil ‘urban’ civilization, the holders of all the virtues possessed by members of the agrarian community, of an almost Arcadian nature, yet devoid of political instincts.<sup>129</sup>

#### 1.1.4 Sclavus—captivus, servus<sup>130</sup>

Before we examine this title and after we have put a number of associations with the term ‘North’ in a wide context, let us now return to the accounts by Widukind and Ibrahim ibn Yaqub discussed above, and try to establish, in conclusion, which specific meanings could be revealed in these texts.

We should begin with the work which refers to the diplomatic mission of the caliph of Cordoba. It is noticeable, already at the beginning, that in Ibrahim ibn Yaqub’s view the duke of Poland cannot have been the ruler of the whole ‘North’—this author knew it perfectly as he listed a number of its peoples. The words he used, however, must have had a certain, more-or-less precise meaning. The aforementioned connotations of the term ‘North’ let us interpret the account in the following way: Mieszko—according to the opin-

<sup>126</sup> See: Tadeusz Lewicki, *Źródła arabskie do dziejów Słowiańszczyzny*, vol. I (Wrocław, 1956), p. 167.

<sup>127</sup> Rüdiger Moldenhauer, “*Terra deserta, locus horroris et vastae solitudinis* als siedlungsgeschichtliche Terminanten in Wagrien und Mecklenburg”, *ZRG Germ. Abt.* 104 (1987), 190–215.

<sup>128</sup> Lemberg, “Zur Entstehung des Osteuropabegriffs”, p. 53, p. 71—indicates the beginning of the 19th century and the dualism, which originated then, between the parts of Europe taken by the French and the Russians. The latter were often called ‘barbarians from the north’ by the French propaganda.

<sup>129</sup> Johann Gottfried Herder, *Ideen zur Geschichte der Menschheit*, vol. 4 (Stuttgart, 1828), pp. 31–35; see also: Karl Kadlec, “O politycznym ustroju Słowian, zwłaszcza zachodnich, przed X wiekiem”, in *Encyklopedia Polska*, vol. 4 (Kraków, 1912), pp. 34–35.

<sup>130</sup> Du Cange, Charles du Fresne, *Glossarum mediae et infimae latinitatis*, vol. 7 (Graz, 1954), p. 357f.

ion of the author(s?) of the intellectual structure conveyed in the account of Ibrahim ibn Yaquub—is the ruler of the most remote Slavs, thus the most savage, and in consequence primitive, militant, and numerous. Therefore, the country of the Piasts—in line with the way that mythologized descriptions of ‘virgin’ areas were perceived—had to be considered to be vast, forested, and full of wild animals, and also, paradoxically, abundant in food and people.<sup>131</sup>

Such an understanding of the reports by the Jewish traveller is confirmed by a recently published study by Paweł Źmudzki, who convincingly shows that in the story of the Amazons included in the account by Ibrahim ibn Yaquub we face a certain archetypical perception of the areas located on the edges of the world known to observers.<sup>132</sup> What is important is that the state of Mieszko I, located on the edge of civilization, although savage, possessed one feature common for organized communities, namely the prevalence of men and their rule—this factor is represented in Ibrahim’s story by an elaborate description of the Piast army. However, order and civilization were supposed not to reach beyond this territory; thus in the structure of the geography conveyed by the traveller appears an anti-community: the state of the Amazons, where the rule went to the sex who, according to majority of authorities, was not destined to perform this function.

It is known that Ibrahim ibn Yaquub never got to Poland.<sup>133</sup> Therefore, his words describing the Piast state and its environs cannot reflect his thoughts based on his own observation, but only what he had heard somewhere from somebody else. The expression he used to name Mieszko I ‘the king of the North’, in the context of the cultural connotations which were associated with this part of the world and functioned in the circles of western-European elites, as well as the information supplied by Ibrahim himself, which confirmed the importance of Otto I’s court for his expedition, explicitly indicates Magdeburg as the place where the envoy of the caliph of Cordoba was informed about the shape and properties of Slavic lands, including the country of Mieszko I.<sup>134</sup>

<sup>131</sup> *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica*, p. 7ff. (1,3); Dušan Třeštík, *Mýty kmene Čechů (7.–10. století). Tři studie ke “starým pověstem českým”* (Praha, 2003), p. 101ff.; Banaszkiewicz, *Polskie dzieje bajeczne*, p. 354ff.

<sup>132</sup> Paweł Źmudzki, “Mieszko I i Amazonki. Wspólnoty wojownicze i normy życia rodzinnego w relacji Ibrahima ibn Jakuba”, in *Tekst źródła. Krytyka—interpretacja*, ed. Barbara Trelińska (Warszawa, 2005), pp. 99–126.

<sup>133</sup> Engels, *Der Reisebericht des Ibrahim*, p. 415, Strzelczyk, *Mieszko Pierwszy*, p. 49; but: Widajewicz, *Studia nad relacją*, p. 80.

<sup>134</sup> Labuda, *Mieszko I*, p. 82f.; Strzelczyk, *Mieszko Pierwszy*, p. 49.

At this stage we discover a certain link between the words of the ‘Polish’ part of Ibrahim of Yaqub’s relation and Widukind’s observation that Mieszko was the ruler of ‘barbarians farther located’. After all, one can notice the reflection in the German chronicler’s view of the opinions, common at that time, expressed by German elites (or in general those of western Europe), according to which ‘barbarism’ was as though an identification, the feature ascribed to them whenever any association with them was made.<sup>135</sup>

The comparison made between such two different accounts seems to be therefore justified. As a matter of fact, they both show what was known and thought about the state of Mieszko I at Otto I’s court. We know well that Widukind’s native monastery in Saxon Corvey belonged to the most important foundations in Germany, maintaining at that time close relations with the emperor. This centre produced a number of clerics who stayed close to Otto I as the court’s chaplains.<sup>136</sup>

The material quoted above confirms explicitly that the early stages of the presence of the Piast state within the Christian civilization involved a significant cultural burden, which placed Mieszko I and his subjects below other communities of ‘old Europe’, which had once belonged to the Carolingian state, or at least had been subjected to its authority.<sup>137</sup> The situation outlined here is understandable up to a point; after all the Piast country did not come to existence before the 930s,<sup>138</sup> and it appeared within sight of Western elites a moment before the conversion, and at that time it was placed by the learned Christian circles within the space occupied by ‘the savage North’. Such placing of the state of the Poles on the edges of the world was justified not only by religion—indeed, in the 10th century it was located on the periphery of civilization and until the 960s it did not maintain, as far as we know, any significant contacts with the world of Christian civilization. Before the ruler of Greater Poland occupied Cracow towards the close of the 10th century,

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<sup>135</sup> Lech A. Tyszkiewicz, “Slavi genus hominum durum”, in *Wokół stereotypów Niemców i Polaków*, ed. Wojciech Wrzesiński, Acta Universitatis Wratislaviensis—Historia 114 (Wrocław, 1993), pp. 3–14; see also: Günter Sowa, Jutta Reisinger, *Das Ethnicon Sclavi in den lateinischen Quellen bis zum Jahr 900*, Glossar zur frühmittelalterliche Geschichte im östlichen Europa, vol. 6 (Stuttgart, 1990), p. 16 passim.

<sup>136</sup> Timothy Reuter, “The ‘Imperial Church System’ of the Ottonian and Salian Rulers: a reconsideration”, *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 33 (1982), 347–374; Karl Leyser, “The Ottonian government”, *The English Historical Reviews* 381 (1981), 721–753, 726f.; Josef Fleckenstein, *Ordnungen und formände Kräfte des Mittelalters* (Göttingen, 1989), pp. 211–221.

<sup>137</sup> Jerzy Strzelczyk, “Polska w strukturze geopolitycznej Europy”, in *Ziemie polskie w X wieku*, p. 43ff.

<sup>138</sup> Przemysław Urbańczyk, “The Role of Archeology in Research on the Beginnings of the Polish State”, *Questiones Medii Aevi Novae* 6 (2001), 253–259.

the borders of the territories under his authority had not been crossed by any major communication route of the day.<sup>139</sup>

The baptism surely brought some significant changes to the political status of the Piast state. Yet it was difficult to modify the categories of cultural perception once established, especially that the place of the state of the Poles was marked by the whole structure of knowledge based on a long tradition. It is unknown how stereotypes present in learned and Church circles corresponded to what was thought about the newly baptised, or even pagan peoples by secular elites. The examples of political cooperation between the German rulers and the pagan Liutizians let us believe that the approach towards the vision of the ‘savage North’ seized by the Devil was rather pragmatic.<sup>140</sup> On the other hand the aforementioned examples of comparing the Slavs to dogs suggest that also secular circles, of course to a certain extent, respected the archetype revealed by intellectuals. We also know that it is common practice for the high culture—even if the need for short-term benefits is so attractive that it demands action against its rules—to create a general framework for human actions and justify the choices made. So if we do not neglect a whole range of associations connected with sketchy remarks in the chronicle by Widukind and the account by Ibrahim ibn Yaquub on Mieszko I and his state, we can reach the conclusion that the political centre, or even, in a sense, the civilizational centre of Central Europe of the day, namely the emperor’s court and the intellectual milieu of Magdeburg, valued the Piasts and their country quite ambivalently.

It is noticeable that the military power of Mieszko I as a possible ally was appreciated—especially during his violent conflict with the Veleti. This is reflected in the detailed description of the Piast army preserved in the account by Ibrahim ibn Yaquub. Importance was also attached to this by a strong imperative of spreading the Christian faith combined with its humanitarianism (but, of course, not always and not everywhere understood properly), which required perceiving Mieszko I’s subjects as potential co-believers and political partners. But this was not all. The group of ideological issues

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<sup>139</sup> Warnke, *Die Anfänge des Fernhandels*, p. 134ff.; Andrzej Buko, *Archeologia Polski wczesnośredniowiecznej. Odkrycia—hipotezy—interpretacje* (Warszawa, 2005), p. 167ff.; Paul Riché, *Les Grandeurs de l’an mille* (Paris, 1999), p. 64.

<sup>140</sup> It does not only concern the participation of the pagan people in the fights of Henry II against Boleslav the Brave, but also the support which the Liutizi provided to the army of Henry IV in his struggle with his enemies inside the Reich—see: Knut Görich, “Eine Wende im Osten, Heinrich II. und Boleslaw Chrobry”, in *Otto III.—Heinrich II. Eine Wende?*, ed. Bernd Schneidmüller, Stefan Weinfurter, *Mittelalter Forschungen 1*, (Sigmaringen, 1997), pp. 95–167, p. 109ff.; *RGSEO*, 3, p. 273, no. 422.

which introduced the inhabitants of the Piast country to the West was counterbalanced by the factors most of which we have already discussed. They are connected with the phenomenon of the 'savage North'. One more remark should be added here. Let us notice that the perception of the Piasts and their subjects must have been strongly influenced by the stereotype of a Slav-slave. It seems that a large part, perhaps even the majority, of the early mediaeval slaves were indeed of Slavic origin. This circumstance after all had its impact on the identity between the ethnic term *S/c/lavus* and a subject, servant (*servus*), or a captive (*captivus*).<sup>141</sup>

As a matter of fact, we approach a separate and difficult problem here, but it should be mentioned not only because it is often completely disregarded in discussions on the origins of the Piast statehood and the presence of the Polish community within Western culture,<sup>142</sup> but, first of all, because the problem is very important for our considerations. It seems that the sources, or even the ideological base for the examples of paternalism and sometimes sense of superiority noticed, quoted, and analyzed in this work, and in other cases missionary ideas, often devoid of arrogance, were rooted not only in Christian and Carolingian messianism, but in a certain intellectual structure formed from the combination of the archetypes of the 'savage North' and the conviction that the status of slaves was natural to the Slavs,<sup>143</sup> or simply a certain intellectual passivity, which required an external incentive to encourage them to enter the road towards civilization.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Du Cange, *Glossarum mediae et infimae*, vol. 7, p. 357f.; Johann Hennig, "Gefangenens-fesseln im slawischen Siedlungsraum und der europäische Sklavenhandel im 6. bis 12. Jahrhundert. Archäologisches zum Bedeutungswandel von *sklabos-sakaliba-sclavus*", *Germania* 70 (1992), 403–426; Lewicka-Rajewska, *Arabskie opisanie Słowian*, p. 204.

<sup>142</sup> This can be found e.g. in an epic work: *Początki Państwa Polskiego*, where indeed efforts were made to explain even less significant issues connected with the origins of the Polish state.

<sup>143</sup> Among the numerous implications of these convictions one should mention the obligation, ascribed to the Slavs, of paying a tribute and their subordination to the Frankish monarchs, see: "Epistola Theotmari episcopi", in *Die Conversio Bagaoriorum et Carantanorum und der Brief des Erzbischofs Theotmar von Salzburg*, ed., Frantisek Lošek, MGH Studien und Texte 15, Hannover 1997, pp. 138–156; also: Dušan Třeštitík, "Von Svatopluk zu Boleslaw Chrobry. Die Entstehung Mitteleuropas aus der Kraft des Tatsächlichen und aus einer Idee", in *The Neighbours of Poland*, pp. 111–145, p. 118.

<sup>144</sup> Jan M. Piskorski, "Średniowieczna kolonizacja niemiecka oraz tzw. prawo niemieckie w ujęciu porównawczym", in *Rozkwit średniowiecznej Europy*, ed. Henryk Samsonowicz (Warszawa, 2001), pp. 94–139, p. 94ff.; Klaus Zernack, "Die deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen in der Mittelalterhistorie aus deutscher Sicht", in *Polen und Deutschland*, pp. 29–42, (especially) p. 30ff.

1.2 *AMICUS IMPERATORIS*

The chronicle by Widukind, despite taking only a slight interest in Mieszko I and his state, brings us, in addition to the important and interesting term ‘barbarian’<sup>145</sup> which was ascribed to the duke of Poland, also another intriguing and important expression: it addresses the Piast ruler, and it does it twice—which in the context of the former term can be found surprising—as ‘a friend of the emperor’.<sup>146</sup> Widukind applied this term while describing the battle of Margrave Wichman with Mieszko I, which took place in 967.<sup>147</sup>

As with the first mention of 963 by the monk of Corvey, which is already known to us, this other account also focuses primarily on the life of the Saxon chronicler’s adventurous relative. Again, the chronicler’s sheer words mean very little in themselves. It is only the analysis of the context in which they are used, expanded by their cultural background, that reveals their significant and complex meaning which—everything weighs in favour of it—substantiates the process of ‘domesticating’ the ruler of the Poles, earlier considered as ‘savage’, and incorporating him into the political and cultural system acceptable to the chronicler.

1.2.1 *Account of a Skirmish of Mieszko I with the Veleti and Wichman in 967*

The second account by Widukind of the ruler of Poland is this time more thorough than the previous one because it ended with the death of the chronicler’s relative. The story begins with the news that Wichman, after suffering another defeat in a fight against his paternal uncle, Herman Billung, fled from Saxony to the basin of the Elbe [the country of the Polabians], from which territory he arrived in Wolin. The outlaw was given a warm welcome in what was then a very big town, port, and commercial emporium as its citizens were just preparing themselves for a war with Poles, for whom the territory of the estuary of the Oder was an attractive direction for their territorial expansion, which gave them hope for great economic successes.<sup>148</sup>

<sup>145</sup> *Widukind*, p. 170, (3,66).

<sup>146</sup> *Widukind*, p. 172, (3,69): [Wichmannus] *cum Sclavis qui dicuntur Vuloini, quomodo Misacam amicum imperatoris bello lacesserent...*; after the defeat he turned to a warrior of Mieszko I: ‘*Accipe*’, *inquit*, ‘*hunc gladium et defer domino tuo, quo pro signo victoriae illum teneat imperatorique amico transmittat*’.

<sup>147</sup> *RGSEO*, vol. 2, p. 200ff. (no. 144).

<sup>148</sup> Zofia Kurnatowska, “Wielkopolska w X wieku i formowanie się państwa polskiego”, in *Ziemia polskie w X wieku*, pp. 99–117.

The text by Widukind suggests that the choice of an ally was not accidental also for Wichman, as the Saxon margrave—remaining in a deep conflict with Herman Billung and Otto I who supported him—‘negotiated with the Slavs who are called Wolinians how they could harass Mieszko, the emperor’s friend, with a war’.<sup>149</sup> So, while it was margrave Gero—as one gathers from the account by Widukind<sup>150</sup>—who sent Wichman against the Poles during the first skirmish in 963, this time his actions were the result of his own decision: by striking Otto I’s ally, he wanted to harm, even to some extent—at least this is the chronicler’s understanding—the emperor himself. We will come back to the analysis of this statement, but first further developments in this matter, which were reported by the chronicler, should be followed. They are of great significance for the understanding of the whole question of his perception of the Polish ruler.

Mieszko, who must have learnt earlier about the arrival of the Saxon margrave in Wolin, had made appropriate preparations for the war. Accordingly, he received support from his father-in-law, the Bohemian duke Boleslav I (935–967, or 972), in the form of two mounted detachments and, effectively commanding his foot soldiers and the Bohemian horsemen, managed to defeat the Wolinians and their ally—the detachment of Wichman. The margrave was killed during his escape.

The chronicler was quite detailed in his description of the death of his relative and emphasised his heroism. Thus during the battle, Wichman, fighting with valour, *defended himself with his arms*. There is no mention of an escape after his defeat in combat. However—Widukind continues

those of higher rank among the enemies, when they found him, recognized by his weapon that they had encountered an eminent man. [...] They called on him to give up his arms and swore that he would be taken unharmed to their duke whom they would ask to hand him over untouched to the emperor. He, however, despite being driven to extremes and aware of his noble status and valour, scorned to shake hands with them but asked them to notify Mieszko of his presence: [Wichman] wants to give up his arms in front of him, shake hands with him. When they were heading to Mieszko, a huge crowd surrounded them and brutally attacked. He, although exhausted, having killed many a man, pulled out his sword and handed it over to one of most senior enemies with these words:

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<sup>149</sup> *Widukind*, p. 172 (3,69); see: Labuda, *Fragmenty dziejów Słowiańszczyzny*, p. 293ff.; Brüske, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte*, p. 29ff.

<sup>150</sup> *RGSEO*, 2, p. 168ff., (no. 122); Robert Holtzmann, *Geschichte der sächsischen Kaiserzeit*, (München, 1943), p. 222f.; Brüske, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte*, p. 30f.; Herbert Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder um das Jahr 1000. Skizzen zur Politik Ottonenreiches und der slavischen Mächte in Mitteleuropa*, Köln-Wien 1971, pp. 34, 132ff.

“Take—says he—this sword and bring it to your lord, may he keep it as a token of the victory and may he hand it over to his friend, the emperor, so that he, having learnt about it, could snigger at his dead enemy, or, rather, bewail his in-law”. And having said that, he turned his face towards the east and begged the Lord as hard as he could in his native language, and gave up the ghost, filled with numerous errors and anguish, to meet the Almighty.<sup>151</sup>

Widukind, as he dedicated his work to Mathilda,<sup>152</sup> Otto I’s daughter, closed up this sequence with an admonitory remark that all the emperor’s enemies would end like Wichman, and with the message that Otto indeed had received the sword of the rebellious margrave. Next, the emperor allegedly ordered a letter to be written to Saxon lords, in which he informed them about his successes, among which—as it seems—the author of the chronicle also included Wichman’s defeat, and where he called them for the fight against the Redars.<sup>153</sup>

This extraordinarily extended story of the death of Wichman is, compared to its significant historical meaning, soaked with stylization, whose job was to highlight a heroic conduct of the chronicler’s relative. However, even formed like this, the story presents a very interesting material for our analysis, as after all it reflects an opinion about the Polish ruler shaped at the time of the redaction of the chronicle, that is c. 970. It should be added that this view was written in the monastery at Corvey, an important Saxon intellectual centre associated with the emperor’s court.<sup>154</sup> Therefore, it is likely that Widukind’s words render the way of thinking about Mieszko and his power expressed by Otto I’s circle.

Leaving aside, at least for a while, the ‘tough’ historical reality, let us wonder what kind of figure of Mieszko emerges in the light of this passage of the chronicler’s account, and what function of the Piast duke is in the story constructed by Widukind. In order to perform our task well, we should, first of

<sup>151</sup> *Widukind* (3,69), p. 172ff.

<sup>152</sup> Mathilda was an abbess in the monastery of Quedlinburg between 966 and 999 and played an important political role—Gerd Althoff, “Mathilde”, *LMA* 6, pp. 391–392; see also: Winfrid Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen und ihre Bedeutung in der Politik. Studien zur Familienpolitik und zur Genealogie des sächsischen Kaiserhauses*, Dissertationen zur Mittelalterlichen Geschichte 5 (Köln – Wien, 1989), p. 201ff.; Gerd Althoff, “Quedlinburg und Gandersheim”, *FMS* 25 (1991), 123–144.

<sup>153</sup> *Widukind*, p. 174, (3,70), *RGSEO*, vol. 2, p. 204ff., no. 146; see also: Labuda, “Wolinianie—plemię pomorskie”, p. 70.

<sup>154</sup> About the monastery: Klemens Honselmann, “Corvey als Ausgangspunkt der Hirsauer Reform in Sachsen”, *Westfalen* 58 (1980), 70–81. Wilhelm Stüwer, “Corvey”, in *Die Benediktinerklöster in Nordrhein-Westfalen*, ed. Rhaban Haacke, *Germania Benedictina* 8 (St Ottilien, 1980), pp. 236–293.



all, look at the structure of the story under consideration, identify its respective elements and discuss each detail in terms of its meaning and place.

At the beginning let us take a look, at least a casual one, at the figure of the main character of the plot we analyse—Wichman. This will let us understand better the reasons why the chronicler took his interest in him. So, the margrave came from a genuinely aristocratic family; Widukind, a half-legendary leader of Saxon risings against Charles the Great, was once its member.<sup>155</sup> Besides, the margrave's father, also Wichman (the Elder), was married to the sister of Henry I's (919–936) wife, Mathilda.<sup>156</sup> Aware of his high social standing, Wichman the Elder was deeply affected by the appointment, in 936, of his younger brother, Herman Billung, as the chief of the Saxons (*princeps militiae*) and the royal governor.<sup>157</sup> His sons: Wichman (the Younger), the opponent of Mieszko I whom we already know, and Ekbert also felt aggrieved by the fact that their father and the family were underestimated by the ruler of the emperor.

The ambitious brothers became rebellious, especially against their paternal uncle, Herman Billung, but they also felt a dislike for Otto I. They joined the anti-royal opposition several times. It happened for the first time in 953, when they joined Liudolf, Otto's son, who rebelled against his father.<sup>158</sup> Captured by the victorious party, they managed to flee to Saxony, where they attacked Herman Billung. Being defeated, they found shelter with the Abodrite dukes, Nacco and his brother Stoignew.<sup>159</sup> In the war in the basin of the Elbe in 955 Wichman and the younger Ekbert fought alongside the Slavs. After their defeat on the river Reknica they fled to France.

<sup>155</sup> Bernd Schneidmüller, "Widukind", *LMA* 9, pp. 74–76.

<sup>156</sup> Hlawitschka, 'Stirps Regia'. *Ausgewählte*, pp. 355–376; see also: *Europäische Stammtafeln*, NF vol. 1.1, eds. Wilhelm K. von Isenburg, Frank Freytag von Loringhoven (Frankfurt a.M., 1998), pl. 11; Die Billunger, Herzoge von (in) Sachsen; more about the family: Hans—Walter Goetz, "Das Herzogtum der Billunger—ein sächsischer Sonderweg?", *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 66 (1994), 167–197.

<sup>157</sup> *Widukind*, p. 92 (2,4); Holtzmann, *Geschichte der sächsischen*, p. 116; Lübke, "Die Elbslawen—Polens Nachbarn", pp. 61–77, p. 67f.; Karl Schmidt, "Neue Quellen zum Verständnis des Adels im 10. Jahrhundert", *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheines* 108 (1960), pp. 185–229, p. 203ff.

<sup>158</sup> *Widukind*, p. 142 (3,24–25); about the uprising of Ludolf—Johannes Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte. Die Ursprünge Deutschlands bis 1024* (Berlin, 1994), p. 517f.; Franz-Reiner Erkens, "Fürstliche Opposition in ottonisch-frühsalischer Zeit. Überlegungen zum Problem der Krise des frühmittelalterlichen deutschen Reiches", *AfK* 64 (1982), 307–370, p. 315ff.; Johannes Laudage, "Überlegungen zur Königserhebung Ottos des Großen und zu den Umständen Thankmars, Heinrichs und Liudolfs", *Historisches Jahrbuch* 112 (1992), 22–71.

<sup>159</sup> *Widukind*, p. 158 (3,50–52); Christian Lübke, "Zwischen Polen und dem Reich. Elbslawen und Gentilreligion", in *Polen und Deutschland*, pp. 91–109, p. 99.

In 958 Wichman, at that time alone—Ekbert settled down in life, and after regaining the ruler's favour lived on part of his family estate<sup>160</sup>—set out to the Redars to continue his fight together with the Slavic warriors against his compatriots. After the Slavs capitulated, the rebellious margrave got the royal pardon and regained his property thanks to the mediation of Gero and his son, whose wife was Wichman's sister.<sup>161</sup> Another defeat, however, did not change his adventurous nature for the better. Soon Wichman attacked his paternal uncle one more time, and again, being defeated, had to flee his homeland. This time he got to the king of the Danes, Harald Bluetooth, whom he tried to induce to participate in the war against the Saxons. He failed to succeed in it; he himself had a narrow escape from capture and fled to Gero. This one referred him—as we already know—to the Slavs so that they together would attack 'remotely living barbarians', or the Polish Mieszko I. We have already learnt the further developments in the life of Wichman, including its tragic end.

The summarized life of the Saxon adventurer shows us two important issues. Firstly, it indicates what kind of restless spirit the chronicler's relative was and that he posed a continuous and harassing threat to the stability of the north-eastern periphery of Otto I's empire. Secondly, we learn how much Wichman's family was valued in the eastern part of the then Germany, as its fame protected the adventurer for many years of his unstable life.

Let us return to the moment crucial for the logic of the chronicler's story, namely the description of Wichman's death. The main accessory which is used, according to Widukind, to establish the meaning of the story is the sword of the heroic warrior. This weapon should be accorded some attention. After all, we know that at that time the sword had a number of different, usually symbolic, connotations.<sup>162</sup>

Our considerations can only and rather superficially approach the complex and in places unclear problems of the ideological significance of this weapon in this period. However, even this little knowledge will let us highlight certain phenomena, which will form a foundation for understanding the thought written in the chronicle by Widukind. Thus let us first notice that the sword was in general associated with masculinity—the common practice was known of establishing agnate relatives, or relatives in general,

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<sup>160</sup> *Widukind*, p. 166 (3,59).

<sup>161</sup> *Widukind*, p. 166 (3,60).

<sup>162</sup> Generally about the problem: Ewart Oakeshott, *The Archeology of Weapons. Arms and Armour from Prehistory to the Age of Chivalry* (New York, 1996), p. 131ff., 200ff.; Wilfried Menghin, *Das Schwert im frühen Mittelalter* (Stuttgart 1983).

'by the sword'. Already from the early Middle Ages, this weapon in such a meaning, archetypical in a sense,<sup>163</sup> had always belonged, in addition to the spear, to the set of the coronation insignia, symbolizing the king's responsibility for abiding by the 'masculine' features of a society: law and order<sup>164</sup>—or the so-called 'authority' (*pax*).<sup>165</sup>

This weapon also determined the place of its owner in his society. For a man-warrior-aristocrat the term 'lay down one's sword' equalled going outside one's estate; leaving the so-called 'world', moving to the clerical estate.<sup>166</sup> Such an act was performed, for example, by margrave Gero, when he, broken by the death of his only son,

laid his victorious arms before the altar of the Prince of the Apostles, Peter [...]. Then, he commended himself and all his property to God.<sup>167</sup>

The sword was always a precious gift,<sup>168</sup> richly decorated was considered to be a real pride of a warrior.<sup>169</sup> This weapon attracted attention so much that it was usual to associate any arms with it, and the phrase to ravage 'with fire and sword' appears like a chorus in all chronicles' descriptions of invasions.

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<sup>163</sup> A sword was a symbol of law: Hendrik Fischer, "Stab und Schwert als Gegensatzpaar der Rechtssymbolik", *Forschungen zur Rechtsarchäologie und rechtlichen Volkskunde* 4 (1982), 3–40; thus the figures of the so called Rolands (the posts displayed on the market squares in German towns, sometimes also in other countries of Central Europe), were always provided with a sword.

<sup>164</sup> *Widukind*, p. 88 (2,1): 'Accipe', inquit, 'hunc gladium, quo eicias omnes Christi adversarios, barbaros et malos Christianos [...]'—the excerpt from the description of Otto I's the royal investiture in Aachen in 936; see also: *Annales Bertiniani* (*Annales von St. Bertin*), ed. Georg Waitz, MGH. SS RG 5 (Hannoverae, 1883), p. 138, (3, a. 877)—the sword as an instrument of investiture; p. 147, (3, a. 879)—a splendid ornament of a warrior; on this function in Eastern Europe: Andrzej Poppe, "Spuścizna po Włodzimierzu Wielkim. Walka o tron kijowski 1015–1019", *KH* 102 (1995), 3/4, pp. 3–22, p. 18; *Lamperti Monachi Hersfeldensis, Annales*, ed. Adolf Schmidt, AQDGM 13 (Berlin, 1957), p. 56, a. 1056: a sword as a weapon—the insignia of God himself.

<sup>165</sup> Dudo of St. Quentin gives us an account of some warriors Williams the Longsword who were once making a scene in their camp. When this was reported to the duke, he gave his envoy his sword and ordered him to show it to the brawlers. Noticing the sword, they calmed down immediately—*Dudonis sancti Quintini, De moribus et actis primorum Normanniae ducum*, ed. Jules Lair, Mémoires de la Société des Antiquaires de Normandie 3/1 (Caen, 1865), pp. 115–301, p. 195 (c. 51); *Dudo of St. Quentin, History of the Normans*, ed. Eric Christiansen (Woodbridge, 1998), p. 73f.

<sup>166</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, p. 123, (3, a. 873).

<sup>167</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 105; *Thietmar*, pp. 68–69 (2,19).

<sup>168</sup> *Magister Adam Bremensis*, p. 208 (1,37).

<sup>169</sup> *Einhardi Vita Karoli Magni*, AQDGM 5: *Quellen zur karolinigische Reichsgeschichte*, vol. 1: *Die Reichsannalen, Einhard Leben Karls es Grossen, Zwei "Leben" Ludwigs, Nithard Geschichte*, ed. Reinhold Rau (Berlin, 1955), p. 194 (c. 23); *Lamperti Monachi Hersfeldensis*, p. 56, a. 1056.

Also the expressions are known that 'with a sword' a country was taken, or defended.<sup>170</sup>

Even though in the times under discussion the phenomenon of knight-hood had not been fully developed, this epoch already witnessed some of its characteristic traits among the aristocracy, for example, we observe in some sources the cases of dubbing those young men who reached adult age,<sup>171</sup> which symbolized the transformation of a young man and his entering the group of warriors.

Therefore, there was a common belief already when Widukind described the life of Wichman that the sword was the embodiment of honour and nobleness, that is why—as it was thought—it should be used by someone suitable by birth, dignity, and valour, and this weapon, in theory, was supposed to be used only in a good cause.<sup>172</sup> The description of Wichman's fight leaves no doubt that in the author of the chronicle's opinion the Saxon margrave deserved to be called a brave and honourable warrior. Yet the origins of his actions, associated with the rebellion against the emperor, did not take—as is stressed in the text—the historian's fancy. The chronicler, as it seems, was in a dilemma. He had to choose between the duty to protect his relative's good name, which he was obliged to do by his solidarity with other family members, and the sense of loyalty to his monarch, which stemmed not only from the status of his monastery, the institution very closely related to the court,<sup>173</sup> but also his personal links with the emperor's family.<sup>174</sup> The composition of the description of Wichman's death is probably the result of a compromise between these two tendencies, inherently in contradiction with each other. This was a compromise which after all, detracting nothing from Otto's right and dignity, brought Wichman a sort of rehabilitation.

<sup>170</sup> *Helmoldi Presbyteri Bosoviensis*, p. 152 (1,38); p. 242 (1,69), p. 362 (2,105).

<sup>171</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, p. 16, (2, a. 838); p. 17, (2, a. 839). In the 10th century Germany there was a ceremony of 'giving a sword' (Schwertleite)—Otto III was dubbed during the ritual which took place at the convention of Sollingen in 994—Gerd Althoff, *Otto III*. (Darmstadt 1996) p. 71ff.; Elsbet Orth, "Formen und Funktionen der höfischen Rittererhebung", in 'Curialitas', *Studien zu Grundfragen der höfisch-ritterlichen Kultur*, ed. Josef Fleckenstein (Göttingen, 1990), pp. 128–170, p. 138, p. 143f.—on the blessing of a sword.

<sup>172</sup> The legal meaning of this weapon: Gernot Kocher, *Zeichen und Symbole des Rechts. Eine historische Ikonographie* (München, 1992), p. 142; this weapon is held by Christ in the images of the Last Judgement.

<sup>173</sup> Oskar Köhler, "Die Ottonische Reichskirche. Ein Forschungsbericht", in *Adel und Kirche. Gerd Tellenbach zum 65. Geburtstag dargebracht von Freunden und Schülern*, ed. Josef Fleckenstein, Karl Schmidt (Freiburg – Basel – Wien, 1968), pp. 141–204.

<sup>174</sup> Althoff, *Inszenierte Herrschaft*, p. 84ff.

Such understanding of the passage of the chronicle under our consideration also contributes to what we already know about knightly culture in its early stages, and in general about the opinions widely spread all over the world on the ethos of a warrior, for whom, of course, the fight till the end and indomitableness, even in the face of the prevailing enemy and death, were important virtues and reasons for fame. In the work by Widukind we find a description of the final moments in life of another rebel against his ruler: an account, full of respect for the desperado, of a skirmish of Tankmar, Otto I's brother, with the superior strength of the enemy—the warriors of the king.<sup>175</sup>

In order to further recognize the problem and identify more traces of the topos noticed here, we should take a look at a certain passage in the 'Song of Roland', a famous epic written, indeed, some one hundred years after the events analysed here, but—as it seems—conveying the atmosphere and mentality of warriors of the times of Widukind and Wichman. We must return, for a while, to this classic book and observe once more the death of its renowned hero.

Roland, after his heroic fight with the Moors, wounded and dying, prayed ardently to God. The strengthless and almost unconscious knight was approached by a Saracen

who uttered this speech: Defeated is Charles' nephew! I shall carry his sword to Arabia!<sup>176</sup>

Roland, however, regained his consciousness, took a hold of his splendid weapon, Durendal, with his right hand, and hit the enemy in his head with his ferruled horn which he held in his other hand, killing him. Later, he tried very hard to break the sword, extolling—in a devout manner—its exquisite virtues. He spoke to it as though to a companion, remembering their joint military achievements.<sup>177</sup> Roland, however, could not destroy the sword, but it was not captured by the enemy either—unworthy of possessing such a great weapon of such a distinguished warrior. Nobody knows what happened to Durendal. It ceased to be the focus of attention for the narrator,

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<sup>175</sup> *Widukind*, p. 96ff. (2,11).

<sup>176</sup> "Vencut est li niés Carles! Icestee espee porterai en Arabie"—*La chanson de Roland. Texte établi d'après le manuscrit d'Oxford*, ed. Gérard Moignet (Paris, 1969), p. 170.

<sup>177</sup> *La chanson de Roland*, p. 172.

who next concentrated on describing the details of the death of his main character in the story.<sup>178</sup>

We can identify a number of similarities between the description of the last moments in the life of Roland and the aforementioned account by Widukind: both characters were famous for their noble descent, they were both relatives of eminent rulers, they both fought hard till the end and did not let their swords be taken away from them by just anybody. These similarities must stem from the common ideal of admirable conduct of warriors shared by both the Saxon chronicler of the close of the 10th century and the anonymous writers of the French epic.

Thus Wichman—even though the chronicler did not have doubts that he had taken the wrong decision to ally himself with the emperor's enemies—was introduced, above all, as a prominent lord who knew what should be the conduct of a really honourable man. He had not decided to surrender until the situation became completely hopeless. Mieszko is the only man among the enemies to whom he can convey his sword. In this case it was not the point that the chief of the enemies was supposed to be the one to be given the weapon, but—what results from the logic of the construction of the topos adopted by Widukind in his story—that Mieszko was the right man as he belonged to the 'friends' of the emperor, for whom the weapon was intended and who finally received it.

There is one more excerpt of another source from the period we discuss, which will let us better understand the meaning of the story by Widukind. Here Thietmar—the author who represents the next generation of Saxon aristocrats (d. 1018)—notices at one point in his chronicle (in his account of the events from the early 970s) that while Otto I was staying in Lusatia, a certain informer approached him. He said that the armour, and perhaps some other belongings,<sup>179</sup> of his son-in-law, Conrad called the Red, a former duke of Lotharingia (944–953), were in the hands of some Slavs, the warriors under the command of a certain vassal of the emperor, called Kuchawiz. Conrad had been killed in the battle against Hungarians by the river Lech in 955, so more than fifteen years passed since he possibly lost his property. Besides, it was not clear how these things got into the Slavs' hands.

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<sup>178</sup> *La chanson de Roland*, p. 176ff. The motif of destroying or hiding a splendid sword from unauthorized people was common in mediaeval epics. Throwing king Arthur's sword to a lake can serve as one such example.

<sup>179</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 103, (2,38); *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 120.

In addition, Otto probably thought highly of this Kuchawiz.<sup>180</sup> Despite all this, however, the emperor started an investigation which ended with a trial by combat during which the informer and his helpers managed to defeat the accused. Kuchawiz and a certain number of his people were hanged because—as Thietmar remarked—they had wanted to hide Conrad's arms in their possession.<sup>181</sup>

Returning to the interrupted main story of our analysis we should notice that the narration created by the Saxon chronicler could be read, more or less, in this way: Wichman had been disloyal to his monarch many times, but his honourable death in a heroic fight demands—as the chronicler suggests—that he should be regarded more favourably. His last prayer was a kind of confession, a request for forgiveness aimed at God. The act of giving a sword together with the request for it to be handed over to the emperor can be understood, to cut it short,<sup>182</sup> as a kind of donating oneself, which symbolizes Wichman's will to return to the world of justice, where the emperor was regarded as the living support of this world. After all, it was Otto, God's chosen one, who was to be the guarantor of stability.<sup>183</sup> He distributed swords, girding them on the noble and that is why the sword returned to him.

In a sense, the chronicler suggests, Wichman deserved to be absolved from sins through his proper death and the decision he had taken to convey his weapon to the emperor, because the meaning of this act can be compared with the ritual, very popular at that time, of *deditio*—an honourable surrender. This ceremony was commonly practised in medieval Germany whenever there was a need to resolve an armed conflict between the ruler and the feudal aristocracy, and it boiled down to the ritual of giving the monarch a sword, often accompanied with expiatory formulas, e.g. approaching the

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<sup>180</sup> ... *sub Cuchavico seniore sibi multum dilecto haberi*...—Thietmar, p. 101ff., (2,38) *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 120.

<sup>181</sup> Thietmar, p. 103 (2,38); *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 120.

<sup>182</sup> Analogies are noticeable with margrave Gero who gave back his sword shortly before his death—Thietmar, p. 69 (2,19).

<sup>183</sup> Lat.: *pax*, Germ. *Friede*, Slav.: *mir*—SSS, vol. 3, p. 260ff.), see: Eberhard Freiherr von Künsberg, *Deutsches Rechtswörterbuch [Wörterbuch der ältern deutschen Rechtssprache]* (Weimar, 1935–1938), pp. 894–912; Heinrich Brunner, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1958), p. 55ff.; Helmut Beumann, *Widukind von Korvei. Untersuchungen zur Geschichtsschreibung und Ideengeschichte des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Weimar, 1950), p. 212ff.; also: *Kaiser Heinrich II. 1002–1024*, eds. Josef Kirmeier, Bernd Schneidmüller, Stefan Weinfurter, Evamaria Brockhoff, (Stuttgart, 2002), p. 13 (sonnection the *pax* and the royal coat ); also: Wolfram von den Steinen, *Der Kosmos des Mittelalters. Von Karl dem Grossen zu Bernard von Clairvaux* (Bern-München, 1967), p. 23ff.; Dušan Třeštík, “*Mír a dobrý rok. Státní ideologie raného přemyslovského státu mezi křesťanstvím a 'pohanstvím'*”, *Folia Historica Bohemica* 12 (1988), pp. 23–41.

ruler barefooted, in a hair shirt, or with a sheath hanging from the rebel's neck. This kind of behaviour almost always guaranteed that the rebellious aristocrats would regain their monarch's favour, and that they would keep, in many cases, their family estates and fiefdoms.<sup>184</sup>

We have tried to understand and investigate in the most precise way the structure of the story written by the Saxon chronicler in an attempt to apply the resulting analyses to our reflections on what role, in Widukind's view, Mieszko I played in the whole issue. It should be emphasised that we are not interested in any 'reality' here, and above all not 'political reality', but only in the reconstruction of the chronicler's opinion, which results from the logic of the text. Therefore, the Polish ruler turns out to have been, to a certain extent, the emperor's 'man' there. His task was, according to the text by the monk of Corvey, to punish Wichman, who became disobedient to Otto. Mieszko performed his duty perfectly and, in order to prove his accomplishment, sent the sword of the impudent margrave to the emperor. However, by no means should such an attitude of the chronicler towards the Polish duke be regarded as disrespectful, which we could rashly assume! Quite the contrary, in Widukind's view the Piast turns out to be a man worthy of belonging to the elite circle of the chosen, the group of men which was cemented by the same 'knightly virtues', whose patron was the emperor—the pillar of earthly existence and, let us add, the embodiment of a special mission to lead Christianity.<sup>185</sup>

### 1.2.2 MEANING OF THE TERM 'AMICITIA' IN THE CHRONICLE BY WIDUKIND

The term 'amicitia', being a very important element of the story under consideration in the work by Widukind, connects, according to the chronicler, Mieszko I with Otto I. This is a serious matter, so it is worth a further analysis. Although the significance of 'amicitia' and the nature of relations that it

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<sup>184</sup> Christiane Witthöft, *Ritual und Text. Formen symbolischer Kommunikation in der Historiographie und Literatur des Spätmittelalters* (Darmstadt, 2004), p. 224ff.; see also: Zbigniew Dalewski, "Political Culture of Central Europe in the High Middle Ages: Aggression and Agreement", in *Political Culture in Central Europe (10th–20th Century)*, part 1: *Middle Ages and Early Modern Era*, eds. Halina Manikowska, Jaroslav Pánek (Prague, 2005), pp. 65–86.

<sup>185</sup> Othmar Hageneder, "Weltherrschaft im Mittelalter", *MIÖG* 93 (1985), pp. 257–278.



is applied to have been in the centre of attention of a number of medieval historians for a long time,<sup>186</sup> the problem has not been fully resolved yet.<sup>187</sup>

In fact, when some general features of this social phenomenon are taken into consideration, the only certain thing is that whenever the term ‘amicitia’ appeared, it always applied to the ties among people of power (monarchs, but also aristocrats),<sup>188</sup> obliging them for mutual aid. No details can be found concerning such arrangements in the materials we know. In every case they are the matter of speculation. The silence of sources in this respect tends to indicate that the relations of the ‘amicitia’—known to us from the world of elites—were not exclusively élite, and their meaning seemed to be obvious to the writers. If we attempt to observe in other social circles in the West, further from the power groups, certain parallels to the phenomenon under discussion, then the practice very popular in the Middle Ages of sworn ties, which aimed at mutual aid, will occur in the field of our observation.<sup>189</sup>

Of course, the ‘amicitia’ according to Widukind existed only among the elites, but the foundations of the whole phenomenon of ‘fraternization of people’ were laid on the willingness to build an institutionalized friendship which was to form a community, almost family-like, and guarantee a single person the sense of security, aid in life and in professional activity.<sup>190</sup>

The perception of the ‘amicitia’ changed in time, and the term’s understanding also varied according to local geographical and cultural circumstances. Research shows that this phenomenon already existed as a specific arrangement of more than a social nature in republican Rome—at that time it not only indicated the circle of people in mutual favour, but also strength-

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<sup>186</sup> Verena Epp, *Amicitia. Zur Geschichte personaler, sozialer, politischer und geistlicher Beziehungen im frühen Mittelalter*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters Bd 44 (Stuttgart, 1999); Margret Wielers, *Zwischenstaatliche Beziehungsformen im frühen Mittelalter: Pax, Foedus, Amicitia, Fraternalitas* (Münster, 1959); Beumann, “*Unitas ecclesiae*”, pp. 3–43; Gerd Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue. Zum politischen Stellung der Gruppenbindungen im früheren Mittelalter*, Darmstadt 1990, p. 88ff. Leyser, “The Ottonian government”, p. 733ff.; Anna M. Drabek, *Die Vorträge der fränkischen und deutschen Herrscher mit dem Papsttum von 754 bis 1020*, Veröffentlichungen des Instituts für Österreichische Geschichtsforschung 22 (Wien-Köln – Graz, 1976), p. 83ff., 91ff.

<sup>187</sup> Hagen Keller, “Reichsorganisation, Herrschaftsformen und Gesellschaftsstrukturen im Regnum Theutonicum”, in *Il secolo di ferro: Mito e realtà del secolo X*, Settimane di studio 38, 1–2 (Spoleto, 1991), pp. 159–195, p. 174ff.

<sup>188</sup> Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und*, p. 88ff.

<sup>189</sup> Otto G. Oexle, “Die mittelalterlichen Gilden: Ihre Selbsteutung und ihr Beitrag zur Formung sozialer Strukturen”, in *Soziale Ordnung im Selbstverständnis des Mittelalters*, *Miscellanea Mediaevalia* 12.1, ed. Albert Zimmermann (Berlin – New York, 1979), pp. 203–226.

<sup>190</sup> Susanne Kaeding, Britta Kümmerlen, Kerstin Seidel, “Heinrich I.—ein ‘Freundschaftskönig?’”, *Concilium Medii Aevi* 3 (2000), pp. 265–326, p. 266.

ened an alliance between the empire and some peoples. In some specialists' view the 'amicitia' did not have a strict legal meaning, but rather a kind of sentimental one. In the period of the empire not much changed in terms of understanding this word, but the central place of the emperor in Roman society left a distinctive impression also here. The 'amicitia' began to mean, first of all, with reference to internal matters, an attitude of the ruler towards certain people. Thus the status of *amicorum Augusti* existed with a number of levels of such a 'friendship', yet its nature remained informal. Also known was the 'amicitia' turned to the outside world, which cemented friendly relations of Rome with other countries, or peoples, and consolidated alliances formed (*foedus*).<sup>191</sup> What matters is that the 'amicitia' could only occur when the partners of Rome were politically independent. The empire never applied such a system in relation to the subjugated peoples.<sup>192</sup>

It is not clear if the Roman model influenced further, medieval development of this phenomenon, or whether it had its separate existence and origin. It is important here that the 'amicitia' which possessed a legal status existed in the times of the Frankish realm. In order to enter into this contract, a formal oath had to be taken, which obliged the parties to nurture their friendship, including mutual advice, aid, and peace.<sup>193</sup> In this respect, this model heralded the appearance of feudal allegiances. However, the analysis of the phenomenon of the medieval 'amicitia' is complicated by the fact that, apart from its legal variant which in most cases was intentional and referred to two participating parties, there was another concept, of the informal 'amicitia', in the Roman style.<sup>194</sup> Besides, one has to remember that the writer could at times use the word 'friendship' to interpret certain relations of a private nature, rather than formal ties between people.

In most cases sources, when informing us about 'friendship', do not speak precisely about its character. Therefore, it is always advisable to examine individual cases so as to understand the meaning of this term.

In this situation of special significance, when Mieszko I was called a 'friend' of Otto I, we do not know the author's intention either. We can be sure, however, that the author meant an arrangement, not sentimental relations.

<sup>191</sup> Kaeding, Kümmerlen, Seidel, "Heinrich I", p. 266f.

<sup>192</sup> Kaeding, Kümmerlen, Seidel, "Heinrich I", pp. 570, 267; in the Frankish era the 'Schwurfreundschaft' (the sworn-in friendship) was formed between the partners of the same rank—Epp, *Amicitia. Zur Geschichte*, p. 180; later, however, during the Ottoman times this arrangement served the monarch of the Reich, still regarded as an honorary one, to bind the defeated aristocrats to him—Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und*, p. 114.

<sup>193</sup> Kaeding, Kümmerlen, Seidel, "Heinrich I", p. 267.

<sup>194</sup> Kaeding, Kümmerlen, Seidel, "Heinrich I", p. 279.

Our certainty comes only after examining the context in which the Saxon historian used this term. Let us analyse the respective passages of his work.

We can find in the chronicle by the monk of Corvey a lot of cases where the ‘amicitia’ occurs. It also seems that the chronicler knew both aforementioned variants of this relation; the informal, ‘Roman’ and the ‘Frankish’, intentional and of legal status. As a matter of fact, the phenomenon under discussion formed in the chronicler’s work the basis of almost all contacts, in his view, between individuals, groups, or even states, if he described their peaceful cooperation.

The term ‘friendship’, as a characteristic of politically integrated groups of people within the chronicler’s native tribe, already appears in the account of the legendary origins of the Saxons.<sup>195</sup> This sort of bond, similar to ordinary friendship, will recur further in the story where the chronicler outlined the historical and ‘state’ past of the Saxons.<sup>196</sup>

We can find, however, also other examples of the ‘amicitia’ in our work, even more interesting, as they have more distinguishing, political character and a stable, as it seems, legal status. So already at the beginning of the chronicle, where the very origins of his native tribe are discussed, Widukind reports on the alleged occurrence of the alliance between the Britons and the Saxons. Its reason was supposedly the defence of the islanders from the invasions of their militant neighbours from the north and west. After the Romans, who were earlier supposed to be the ‘friends’ of the Britons,<sup>197</sup> refused to help, the latter appealed to the chronicler’s compatriots, who promised their assistance. However, after the job was done, the Saxons: *so remained in this country for some time, benefiting from their friendship with the Britons.*<sup>198</sup> Next, this alliance, after it turned out that the Britons did not

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<sup>195</sup> *Widukind*, p. 24 (1,5); see also: Jacek Banaszekiewicz, “Widukind on the Saxon Origins. Saxo, Thuring, and Landkaufszene (Res geste Saxonice 1,5)”, *Acta Poloniae Historica* 91 (2005), 25–54.

<sup>196</sup> After defeated uprising in 953: *Liudulfus autem filius imperatoris, cum fidem vult servare amicis, patria cessit—Widukind*, p. 164, (3,57); ‘faithfull’ was also Otto I—*ibid.*, p. 118, (2,36); in similar sense the *amicitia* used in: *ibid.*, p. 30, (1,9); p. 102, (2,15); p. 136 (3,15); p. 140 (3,20); p. 144, (3,30).

<sup>197</sup> *Populus namque Romanus, Martiali imperatore a militibus interfecto, externis bellis graviter fatigatus non sufficiebat solita auxilia administrare amicis—therefore the Britons were advised: Certos amicos Brettis Saxones sciatis et eorum necessitatibus atque commodis aequae semper affuturos—Widukind*, p. 26, (1,8).

<sup>198</sup> *Manserunt itaque in illa regione aliquante tempore, vicaria Brettorum bene usi amicitia—Widukind*, p. 26, (1,8).

have a strong military power, did not prevent the newcomers from attacking their ‘friends’, defeating them and capturing their land.<sup>199</sup>

Another military alliance, with the ‘amicitia’ also serving as the keystone, which brought far more serious consequences than the above-mentioned one, was later formed between the Saxons and the Franks. This time their goal was to defeat the Thuringians. The matter was even more momentous for the chronicler as it was the Franks who had formed the state which later incorporated his homeland, whereas in the times of Widukind the Saxons took over the power over it. This may be the reason why the chronicler devoted an exceptional amount of attention to this ‘amicitia’.<sup>200</sup>

Let us take a look at the text of the source:

the Franks, who found it difficult to fight the Thuringians, called Widukind’s compatriots to their military camp: the Saxons immediately and without long considerations sent nine commanders, each with one thousand warriors. And when they arrived at the camp, each of them entered with a hundred, the rest being left outside the camp, and greeted Theuderic<sup>201</sup> with words of peace. This was received by Theuderic, who spoke to [every man], and shook hands with everybody, with great joy. In return they said: ‘The Saxon people, under your command, sends us to you and here we are, ready to defeat your enemies or, if our fate decides differently, we shall die for you. [...]’<sup>202</sup>

So this passage of the source shows explicitly that the above described ‘amicitia’ was formed for a specific, clearly determined purpose. The Franks called their partner to them, because they were mainly interested in forming this alliance, or perhaps, they were its more powerful party.<sup>203</sup> The guests were regarded as the representatives of the people getting ready for the alliance.

<sup>199</sup> *Widukind*, p. 28, (1,8).

<sup>200</sup> Verena Epp, “Rituale frühmittelalterlicher ‘amicitia’”, in *Formen und Funktionen öffentlichen Kommunikation im Mittelalter*, ed. Gerd Althoff, VuF 51 (Sigmaringen, 2001), pp. 11–24, p. 22.

<sup>201</sup> Theuderic I (†533), the son of Clovis I—Ulrich Nonn, “Theuderic”, *LMA* vol. 8, p. 687.

<sup>202</sup> *Widukind*, pp. 32–34, (1,9): *Saxones nichil cunctati novem duces cum singulis milibus militum destinare non dubitant. Et ingressi duces in castra, singuli cum centenis militibus reliqua multitudinem extra castra dimissa, salutant Thiadricum verbis pacificis. Quod cum Thiadricus hilarior suscepisset, dextris datis et acceptis, copiam viris fandi concessit. At illi: ‘Populus’, aiunt, ‘Saxonum tibi devotus et tuis parens imperiis misit nos ad te; et ecce assumus parati ad omne quodcumque tibi voluntas suggesserit, parati, ut aut hostes tuos vincamus aut, si fortuna aliud iusserit, pro te moriamur...’.*

<sup>203</sup> The refusal of the proposal meant an open hostility. According to Widukind, this was the reason for the war of the Franks with the Thuringians—the Frankish envoy reportedly said to the king of the Thuringians: *Thiadricus misit me ad te, exoptans te bene valere et lato magnoque diu imperio vigere, seque tibi non dominum, sed amicum, non imperatorem, sed propinquum, propinquitatisque iura inviolabiliter tibi finetenus volle servare demandat; tantum*

Forming the ‘amicitia’ was accompanied by a number of ritual gestures with shaking hands as their climax, and the pact was sealed by their common fight against the Thuringians. As a result of this whole enterprise:

[the Saxons] were named comrades and friends of the Franks;<sup>204</sup>

and also:

having taken in possession the land [of the defeated enemy], they lived in peace, making use of their friendship and the pact with the Franks.<sup>205</sup>

As a matter of fact, the idea of the pact described by Widukind exceeded an ordinary alliance, whose aim would be to produce a political result. The ‘amicitia’ was to create a certain ‘friendly’ community, whose members looked after each other. This concept is complemented by the following words of the Saxon chronicler:

While Charles the Great [...] decided [...] that] a neighbouring [so much] noble people cannot remain in serious errors [of its pagan faith] and tried to direct [them] by all possible means to the right track. And so, he achieved his goal partly by delicate persuasion and partly by military force, and in the thirtieth year of his imperial rule [...] former allies and friends of the Franks now became brothers and as if one people in Christian faith, as we can observe [today].<sup>206</sup>

Then Charles the Great, out of a sense of duty which obliged him to look after a ‘befriended’ people, subdued the Saxons after almost thirty years of bloody fights so that they should not remain in errors of paganism. The idea to permanently unite the Saxons with the Franks with the ‘amicitia’ played, almost from the very origins of the native tribe, a fundamental role in the structure of the history of the Saxons built by the chronicler. This thought became for Widukind the ideological basis of the concept *translatio imperii*<sup>207</sup>

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*ut a populi Francorum concordia non discordes, rogat: ipsum namque sibi regem sequuntur constitutum—Widukind, p. 28, (1,9).*

<sup>204</sup> *Socii quoque Francorum et amici appellati—Widukind, p. 40 (1,13).*

<sup>205</sup> *Widukind, p. 42 (1,14): Saxones igitur possessa terra summa pace quieverunt, societate Francorum atque amicitia usi.*

<sup>206</sup> *Widukind, p. 44 (1,15): Magnus vero Karolus [...] considerabat [...], finitimam gentem nobilemque vano errore retineri non oportere; modis omnibus satagebat, quatinus ad veram viam duceretur. Et nunc blanda suasionem, nunc bellorum inpetu ad id cogebat, tandemque tricesimo imperii sui anno obtinuit ob id qui olim socii et amici erant Francorum, iam fratres et quasi una gens ex Christiana fide, veluti modo videmus, facta est.*

<sup>207</sup> Hans W. Goez, ‘*Translatio imperii*’. *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Geschichtsdenkens und der politischen Theorien im Mittelalter und in der früheren Neuzeit* (Tübingen, 1958); Reinhard G. Kratz, ‘*Translatio imperii*’: *Untersuchungen zu den aramäischen Danielerzählungen und ihrem theologiegeschichtlichen Umfeld*, Wissenschaftliche Monographien zum Alten und Neuen Testament 63 (Neukirchen – Vluyn, 1991); see also: Wolfgang Eggert, Barbara

of assuming the rule over the state of the Eastern Franks by Henry I of the Liudolfing dynasty. It also explained why his successor stayed in power in the community of the peoples now remaining under the rule of the Franks.

This concept was complemented by another story in the chronicle about a kind of designation of Henry by the dying Conrad I of the Salian dynasty (911–919),<sup>208</sup> who after all was Frankish and, as it was thought, a relative of Charles the Great.<sup>209</sup> According to the chronicler, the dying king ordered his brother, Eberhard, to

go and see Henry with the whole [royal] treasury and, while handing it down, to make peace and receive his friendship to be maintained till the very end, with loyalty and good will.<sup>210</sup>

As a result of this act, Conrad assured Eberhard that

he would be friends with him [i.e. Henry] in the future.<sup>211</sup>

The ‘amicitia’ between Henry I and the Frankish duke Eberhard, who followed the will of the last ruler of the Franks, thus—in Widukind’s view—legitimated the power of the Saxons over the whole territory of the western Franks.<sup>212</sup> This cannot have been an alliance between equal partners; it was Eberhard who took on the role of a supplicant—he went to Saxony and received some benefits from its lord. In these circumstances it was obvious that the Frankish duke would yield to the power of the Saxon ruler,<sup>213</sup> and later on of the monarch of the German kingdom to be born soon.<sup>214</sup> Eberhard

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Pätzold, *Wir-Gefühl’ und Regnum Saxonum bei frümiddelalterlichen Geschichtsschreibern* (Weimar, 1984), p. 206ff.

<sup>208</sup> *Widukind*, p. 56 (1,26); see: Johannes Fried, “Die Königserhebung Heinrichs I.: Errinerung, Mündlichkeit und Traditionsbildung im 10. Jahrhundert”, in *Mittelalterforschung nach der Wende 1989*, ed. Michael Borgolte, *HZ Beiheft 20—NF* (München, 1995), pp. 267–318, p. 281ff.

<sup>209</sup> The ‘blood’ of the Carolingians as a legitimization of power: Emil Kimpen, “Zur Königsgenealogie der Karolinger bis Stauferzeit”, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 103, (1955), pp. 35–115; Johannes Fried, “Karl der Grosse. Geschichte und Mythos”, in *Mythen Europas. Schlüsselfiguren der Imagination*, vol. 2: *Mittelalter* (Regensburg, 2004), pp. 14–48, p. 25ff.

<sup>210</sup> *Widukind*, p. 56 (1,26): *adiit Heinricum seque cum omnibus thesauris illi tradidit, pacem fecit, amicitiam promeruit; quam fideliter familiariterque usque in finem obtinuit*; see also: Hagen Keller, *Ottonische Königsherrschaft. Organisation und Legitimation königlicher Macht* (Darmstadt, 2002), pp. 91–130.

<sup>211</sup> *Widukind*, p. 56 (1,25): *eum foederatum possis habere in perpetuum*.

<sup>212</sup> Beumann, “*Unitas ecclesiae—unitas*”, p. 39f.

<sup>213</sup> Gerd Althoff, “*Amicitiae’ und ‘Pacta’*. Bündnis, Einung, Politik und Gebetsgedanken im beginnenden 10. Jahrhundert”, *MGH Schriften 37* (Hannover, 1992), p. 28.

<sup>214</sup> Ernst Karpf, *Herrscherlegitimation und Reichsbegriff in der ottonischen Geschichtsschreibung des 10. Jahrhunderts* (Stuttgart, 1985), p. 159ff.

was addressed, however, as *secundus a rege*.<sup>215</sup> He was assigned an autonomous region which encompassed the area of Franconia, and after 926 also temporarily Lotharingia. As a matter of fact, his status was almost that of royalty, which Widukind must have realised.<sup>216</sup> It is not known whether this pact was sworn. What is certain, however, is that its content was precisely agreed upon, as it is noticeable that both partners had to reach a mutual compromise on some issues, but at the same time they got some concessions.<sup>217</sup> What particularly matters here is that Widukind associated ‘amicitia’ with peace (*pax*), which was supposed to last between the parties of the treaty, with loyalty (*fides*), and with an alliance (*foederatio*).

The Saxon chronicler provided his readers with slightly fewer details on the ‘amicitia’ which in 921 united Henry I and the duke of Bavaria, Arnulf. We can only learn that the agreement was reached after the Saxon monarch invaded Bavaria. It was only then that Arnulf, besieged in the capital town of Ratisbon (known at present as Regensburg), his warriors outnumbered by the enemy, decided to yield to the authority of Henry, who had been announced king of the eastern Franks two years before.<sup>218</sup> Thus he opened the gates of Ratisbon, set out to the king’s camp and—as we assume—after the ritual of expiation (*deditio*) was received with respect and named the king’s friend.<sup>219</sup> This treaty let Arnulf maintain his authority in Bavaria, a wide autonomy together with the right of patronage over the local Church, including the privilege of bishop’s investiture.<sup>220</sup> In practice his status was almost equal to that of a king.<sup>221</sup>

One needs to add here that the pact of ‘amicitia’ did not have link the king automatically with every great lord subordinated to him. The duke of

<sup>215</sup> Günter Wolf, “Die Heilige Lanze, Erzbischof Heribert von Köln und der ‘secundus in regno’ Pfalzgraf Ezzo”, *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 104 (1993), pp. 23–27; Karl Brunner, “Der fränkische Fürstentitel im neunten und zehnten Jahrhundert”, in *Intitulatio II: Lateinische Herrscher- und Fürstentitel im neunten und zehnten Jahrhundert*, ed. Herwig Wolfram, *MIÖG Ergänzungsband* 24 (Wien – Köln – Graz, 1973), pp. 179–340, p. 182ff.; 252ff.

<sup>216</sup> Althoff, ‘Amicitiae’ und ‘Pacta’, p. 21ff.; Matthias Becher, *Rex, Dux und Gens. Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des sächsischen Herzogtums im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert*, *Historische Studien* 444, Husum 1996, p. 229ff.

<sup>217</sup> Kaeding, Kümmerlen, Seidel, “Heinrich I”, p. 286.

<sup>218</sup> *Widukind*, p. 56ff, (1,26); see Eckhard Müller-Martens, *Regnum Theutonicum. Aufkommen und Verbreitung der deutschen Reichs- und Königsauffassung im früheren Mittelalter* (Berlin, 1970), p. 36ff.

<sup>219</sup> *Widukind*, p. 58, (1,27): *Qui honorifice susceptus amicus regis appellatus est.*

<sup>220</sup> *Liutprandi Antapodosis*, AQDGM 8: *Quellen zur Geschichte der Kaiserzeit*, p. 318 (2,23): *Arnaldus [...] Heinrici regis miles efficitur et ab eo [...] concessis totius Bagoariae pontificibus honoratur.*

<sup>221</sup> Becher, *Rex, Dux und Gens*, p. 213ff.

Swabia, Burchard, subjugated by Henry's armed expedition before the attack on Arnulf did not receive the status of the royal 'friend',

even though he surrendered himself to him [i.e. Henry] with all his towns and people.<sup>222</sup>

Thus obviously the forming of the pact of 'amicitia' with the ruler was regarded as a sort of privilege available for the chosen ones, not for everybody, sometimes not even for a duke.

Some interesting details on how Widukind understood the matter discussed here can be found in the paragraph, included in the chronicle, of 'amicitia' formed between Henry I and duke Giselbert of Lotharingia in 928.<sup>223</sup> In fact the historian tells us an anecdote, or perhaps, a slightly fabulous story. Here one of the foes of Giselbert, who was the natural hereditary lord of Lotharingia, imprisoned him deceitfully and handed over to Henry as his enemy. As time went by, however, the king,

noticing that the young man distinguished himself with bravery, noble birth, authority, and also riches, began to treat him in a friendly manner, and finally engaged him to his daughter, named Geberga. Thus, having tied him with his house through family connections and friendship, he entrusted him with the administrative power over the whole of Lotharingia.<sup>224</sup>

What is particularly noticeable in this passage of the chronicle by Widukind is the context in which the royal 'amicitia' appears. The beneficiary of such a pact with the monarch must enjoy high status and have the right personality, he should also be of proper birth and own the rights to a large estate, or, perhaps, and this is how the chronicler's words should be understood, possess, or at least aspire to a separate territorial power close to the sovereign one, or of such tradition (*regnum*).<sup>225</sup>

The final one in a range of examples of Henry I's 'amicitia' presented by Widukind was the connection between the German ruler and count

<sup>222</sup> *Widukind*, p. 58, (1,27): *tradidit semet ipsum ei [i.e. Heinrici] cum universis urbibus et populo suo*.

<sup>223</sup> Kaeding, Kümmerlen, Seidel, "Heinrich I", p. 287f.

<sup>224</sup> *Widukind*, p. 62, (1,30): *Deinde videns adolescentem valde industriam, genere ac potestate, divitiis quoque clarum, liberaliter eum coepit habere, ac postremo desponsata sibi filia nomine Gerberga affinitate pariter cum amicitia iunxit eum sibi, sublegato omni ei Lotharii regno*.

<sup>225</sup> Beumann, "Unitas ecclesiae—unitas", pp. 3–43; or: Helmut Beumann, "Das Imperium und die Regna bei Wipo", in *Aus Geschichte und Landeskunde. Forschungen und Darstellungen. Franz Steinbach zum 65. Geburtstag gewidmet von seinen Freunden und Schülern*, eds. Max Braubach, Franz Petri, Franz Steinbach (Bonn, 1960), pp. 11–36.



Herbert II of Vermandois. This issue was mentioned by the chronicler quite perfunctorily while he praised the king's wide renown after his victory over the Hungarians at Riade in 933.<sup>226</sup> That is to say that

some dignitaries from other kingdoms streamed to him in search for his favour, to be able to cherish proven trustworthiness of such a great and honourable man.<sup>227</sup>

Among those admiring Henry I was also count Herbert, who asked the Saxon monarch to aid him in his fight against his own monarch, the French ruler Rudolf (923–936).<sup>228</sup> Henry complied with Herbert's request as

the king was this sort of [a man] who never refused to help his friends.<sup>229</sup>

Unfortunately, no further details can be found in this case that could let us answer the questions when and on what grounds this 'amicitia' was formed. There are doubts, however, that it was a political matter and it probably concerned a diversion against France during the time of Henry's seizure of Lotharingia.<sup>230</sup> It should be noted here that Widukind knew that Herbert's county was situated outside Henry I's territorial power. Thus the author did not regard—as it may seem—the forming of 'amicitia' between his suzerain and a lord of the kingdom of the western Franks as an act of extending the power of Henry I onto part of a foreign territory. This kind of assumption could well be made on the basis of the previously described examples of Frankish Eberhard, Bavarian Arnulf, or Lotharingian Gisibert.

All the aforementioned bonds of 'friendship' between the king and dukes did not survive Henry I's death. Therefore it seems, at least with regard to the time discussed here, that the pact of 'amicitia', formed between individuals, not peoples, was to link merely the two contracting parties, and did not extend to their successors.

Moreover, noteworthy is the fact that Otto I, unlike his father, rarely formed pacts like those depicted here. Widukind did not mention it at all whether he had any 'friends' outside the territory of his own state, apart from the case of Polish Mieszko already discussed. He only notices that such

<sup>226</sup> RGSEO, 2, p. 28f (no. 39).

<sup>227</sup> *Widukind*, p. 76ff., (1,39): *Unde et aliorum regnorum proceres eum adierunt, gratiamque in conspectu eius invenire quaerentes, fidem talis ac tanti viri probatam habentes dilixerunt; w sprawie znaczenia terminu gratia—Gerd Althoff, *Spiegeln der Politik im Mittelalter. Kommunikation in Friede und Fehde* (Darmstadt, 1997), pp. 199–229, p. 203ff.*

<sup>228</sup> Jean Richald, "Rudolf, König von Westfranken", *LMA* 7, pp. 1077–1078.

<sup>229</sup> *Widukind*, p. 78, (1,39): *Ipse enim rex talis erat, qui nichil negaret amicis.*

<sup>230</sup> Kaeding, Kümmerlen, Seidel, "Heinrich I", p. 290.

‘friendship’ through the agency of Gero was suggested to Stoignew, the duke of the Abodrites, before the battle at Reknica in 955.<sup>231</sup> This never happened because of Stoignew’s refusal.

The chronicler also knew that there were some people benefitting from the ruler’s ‘friendship’ within the group of lower lords subordinated to Otto’s authority.<sup>232</sup> However, he mentioned neither their names nor ranks. He only referred to one abbot of Fulda, Hadamar, who was *in gratia et amicitia regis*.<sup>233</sup>

What is more, Widukind provides us with some other examples of those pacts that he interprets as ‘amicitia’, which link pagan peoples, as well as those formed between Christians and pagans. This first variant is illustrated by an alliance between the Hungarians and the Serb Daleminzi.<sup>234</sup> Their story begins when the latter, apprehensive of the possibility of an attack from Henry I, an adversary of the nomads from the Pannonia who was growing in power, took a decision to break off the alliance and did not give their support to the Hungarians, who were in 934 marching across Lusatia towards Saxony. The chronicler gave the following account of the symbolic breaking off of the alliance:

[the Hungarians] chose their route across the country of the Daleminzi and demanded assistance from their old friends. Those, however, because they knew, that they were heading towards Saxony and the Saxons were ready to fight with them, threw in front of them a dog as a gift.<sup>235</sup>

We can assume that in this case conveying a dog to the Hungarians could be interpreted as giving them back their loyalty, which was connected—as we could observe on the basis of the aforementioned examples—with ‘amicitia’. Such a line of interpretation is suggested by another excerpt of the chronicle by Widukind, which informs us about the punishment which

<sup>231</sup> *Widukind*, p. 162 (3,53): *mittitur ad principem barbarorum, qui dicebatur Stoinef, Gero comes, quatinus imperatori se dedat: amicum per id adepturum, non hostem experturum.*

<sup>232</sup> *Widukind*, p. 136 (3,15), p. 140 (3,20), p. 144 (3,30).

<sup>233</sup> *Widukind*, p. 120, (2,38); see: Karpf, *Herrscherlegitimation und Reichsbegriff*, p. 147, note no. 23.

<sup>234</sup> *Widukind*, p. 48 (1,20): *...igitur exercitus Ungariorum a Sclavis conductus, multa strage in Saxonia facta et infmita capta preda, Dalamantiam reversi obvium invenerunt alium exercitum Ungariorum; qui comminati sunt bellum inferre amicis eorum, eo quod auxilia eorum previssent, dum illos ad tantam predam duxissent.*

<sup>235</sup> *Widukind*, p. 74 (1,38): *Et iter agentes per Dalamantiam ab antiquis opem petunt amicus. Illi vero scientes eos festinare ad Saxoniam Saxonesque ad pugnandum cum eis paratos, pinguisimum pro munere eis proiciunt canem.*

was administered to the Frankish duke Eberhard for his being disloyal to the ruler and for his participation in an uprising against Otto:

As soon as the king found out about this appropriation, he ordered Eberhard to deliver him as penance some horses worth one hundred talents [Lat. *talentum*]. The monarch also ignominiously [punished] all the military commanders who had aided the duke by getting them to carry dogs as far as the royal palace in Magdeburg.<sup>236</sup>

This act should probably be interpreted as a humiliating reminder directed at those to blame of loyalty which they had promised to their king.<sup>237</sup>

Widukind tells us about another pact of ‘amicitia’, this time the one which linked the Saxon margrave, Gero, with the Slavic tribe of the Rujani,<sup>238</sup> which turned out well during the battle, difficult for the Germans, at Reknica in 955, where the Rujani’s support was a contributing factor in the defeat of the army of the Veleti and Abodrites.<sup>239</sup> Thietmar of Merseburg wrote on how the pagan Slavs sealed, in the form of a ritual, the peace treaty; perhaps this was also the way of confirming the pacts of ‘amicitia’. Here the chronicler reports that the Lutizians—possibly also in the case of their alliance with Henry II, which was directed against Poland—presented their partners with some ringlets of hair and bundles of grass.<sup>240</sup> No details are known about this ritual; one can only assume, on the basis of some analogies, that it was full of symbolism which referred to the ideological foundations of traditional societies.<sup>241</sup>

<sup>236</sup> *Widukind*, p. 94 (2,6): *Qua presumptione rex audita condempnavit Evurhardum centum talentis aestimatione equorum, omnesque principes militum, qui eum ad hoc facinus adiuvabant, dedecore canum, quos portabant usque ad urbem regiam quam vocitamus Magathaburg.*

<sup>237</sup> Bernd Schütte, “Das Hundetragen. Ein Rechtsbrauch im Mittelalter.” *Historisches Jahrbuch* 110, (1990), pp. 289–308; see also: Christine E. Janotta, “Der Hund im Mittelalter”, *Insbrucker Historische Studien* 14/15 (1994), pp. 13–32.

<sup>238</sup> *Widukind*, p. 162 (3,54).

<sup>239</sup> Christian Lübke, “Proces wkraczania Niemców na ziemię słowiańskie i początek niemieckiej kolonizacji na wschód od Łaby i Soławy”, in *Wędrowka i etnogeneza w starożytności i średniowieczu*, eds. Maciej Salamon, Jerzy Strzelczyk (Kraków, 2004), pp. 305–312.

<sup>240</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 351, (6,25); *The ‘Chronicon’*, p. 254.

<sup>241</sup> In old beliefs hair expressed vitality; accordingly grass equaled the hair of the earth—see: Stanisław Rosik, *Interpretacja chrześcijańska religii*, p. 132f.; also: August Nitschke, “Erde in Recht und Kult. Die symbolische Interpretation als Zugang zum Verständnis der Germanen im frühen Mittelalter”, in *Symbole des Alltags. Alltag der Symbole. Festschrift für Harry Kühnel zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Gertrud Blaschitz, Helmut Hundsbichler (Graz, 1992), pp. 733–746: even though the author thought that the examples he quoted concerned the Germans, they were also known among other Indo-Europeans.

Now, after this survey of how and where the Saxon chronicler applied the term 'amicitia' and after its meanings have been recognised, let us return to Mieszko I, who is of our special interest in this regard. The remarks on the structure of the discussed passage of the chronicle, made at the beginning of this chapter, could provoke the assumption that the pact of 'amicitia' that linked the Polish duke with the emperor was used by Widukind to form a fictional structure which, being composed in the form that he accepted, would suitably display the story of his relative—Wichman the Younger. In fact, this observation would let us doubt the value of this whole account, as know a range of examples where chronicles make up their 'facts' which they need to construct their own vision of the past. Yet there is one circumstance which lends credence to Widukind's words. Let us notice that the text of the work by the monk of Corvey was completed before 973, probably not after Otto I's death. It was dedicated to Mathilda, the emperor's daughter—thus the author had to take into consideration that his story would be read by the people associated with the court, acquainted with the realities of the monarch's political principles. This fact greatly increases the chronicler's credibility, or even seems quite convincing that, in fact, there must have been a pact of 'amicitia' between Mieszko I and the emperor.

It remains unclear when and where this 'amicitia' was formed, on what grounds, and what rituals were involved. Yet it seems that, as it is suggested by other examples of these sorts of pacts, the Polish duke, being the inferior party in the would-be alliance, was compelled to head to one of the capitals of the state of the Liudolfings of the day (Magdeburg, Quedlinburg, or Merseburg)<sup>242</sup> in order to take part in the traditional ceremonies.

The pact of 'amicitia' should be dated to the period between 963, marked by Mieszko's defeat in his first skirmishes with Wichman, and 967, the former's ultimate victory. It has to be added that—if it was really imperative for the parties to physically meet in order to form the pact, which is not certain—this could only have happened between February 965 and the autumn of 966, when the presence of Otto I in Germany is confirmed by sources. A most suitable opportunity would be Easter of 966, which was celebrated by the emperor in Quedlinburg.<sup>243</sup> However, the dating of the pact under discussion

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<sup>242</sup> Quedlinburg could be another possible place. There Otto I spent Easter; later on the ruler stayed in the west of Germany, and next he visited Italy between the autumn of 966 until the autumn of 972—*Regesta imperii*, 1: *Sächsisches Haus 919–1024*, Abt.1: *Die Regesten des Kaiserreichs unter Heinrich I. und Otto I. 919–973*, ed. Johann F. Böhmer (Hildesheim, 1967), p. 195ff.

<sup>243</sup> *Regesta imperii*, 1, Abt.1, p. 177ff.

does not have to be necessarily associated with the Piast ruler's baptism. After all, there are examples of the pacts of 'amicitia' formed between Christians and pagans. And it does not seem possible, as no mentions concerning Mieszko I's conversion are known from any German sources, that the act of christening was carried out in a German place of cult, or with the participation of the local senior clergy.<sup>244</sup>

### 1.2.3 *Mieszko I and the Empire in the Views of Widukind of Corvey and Thietmar of Merseburg*

The account of the monk of Corvey of the pact of 'amicitia', linking the Polish ruler with Otto I, does not suggest that the chronicler particularly approved of this deal and of its consequences in terms of an appreciation of Mieszko I's position. It is evident that the report on the Polish duke—and some remarks on the German elites regarding the eastern policy of the empire—is present in the chronicler's text in a way by coincidence, because it suited the story of Wichman written by Widukind.

This view is decidedly different from the opinion on Mieszko which was expressed by another Saxon chronicler, Thietmar of Merseburg, who wrote his work some thirty years later. This latter author—as we will observe below—intentionally creates and manifests, by showing a certain image of the Polish ruler, his own judgement, which is, of course, on a par with the views articulated by some of his contemporary Saxon feudal lords.

The consequences of the disparity between our authors can be well observed when we compare their ways of describing Mieszko I's first contacts with the empire of Otto I. Widukind, as we could notice, is not particularly interested in the Polish ruler. Thietmar, however, who wrote already during the growth of the Piasts' political power, clearly pays attention to Mieszko I's figure. His account of the duke is quite biased; he makes a selection of facts, an sometimes, perhaps, even makes them up in a way so that they testify to the low political status of the Piast, his subjugation not only to the authority of the emperor, but also to the local German dignitaries. This characteristic of Thietmar's approach towards Polish matters is vividly shown in the information on the extension of margrave Gero's superiority over Mieszko.<sup>245</sup>

<sup>244</sup> Labuda, *Studia nad początkami państwa*, vol. 1, p. 443ff.; Angenendt, *Kaiserherrschaft und Königstaufe*, p. 296ff.; Józef Dobosz, *Monarchia i możni wobec Kościoła w Polsce do początku XIII wieku* (Poznań, 2002), p. 25ff.

<sup>245</sup> Thietmar, p. 59, (2,14): *Gero Orientalium marchio Lusizi et Selpuli, Miseenem quoque cum sibi subiectis imperiali subdidit dicioni*; *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 102; an example of an old style

We could assume that the Polish duke indeed felt compelled to seek contacts with Otto, because of the successes achieved by the expansive margrave in Lusatia during his campaign of 963–64, which would accord with the already mentioned words by the bishop of Merseburg. The aforementioned examples of ‘amicitia’ prove, after all, that in the 10th century such a pact in general involved a submission of one, weaker, party, to the other, stronger one. Therefore, Thietmar’s account would correspond with Widukind’s information. The problem is, however, that the chronicler from Merseburg, who writes some forty years later, also notes down in another part of his work that the Polish duke, ‘loyal to the emperor’, paid to him a tribute ‘as far as the Warta river’.<sup>246</sup> This message has been widely discussed in literature.

It would be difficult to quote the whole discussion here;<sup>247</sup> the question in itself is of no particular significance from our point of view, apart from one aspect. The above-listed examples of ‘amicitia’, which existed in the 10th century, contain no mention, whatsoever, that the ‘friends’ were linked not only by ‘loyalty’ and ‘love’, but also by a tribute.<sup>248</sup> What is more, the cases of imposing tributes on subjugated peoples which are described in sources do not contain any information that would suggest the existence of ‘amicitia’ in addition to the tribute.<sup>249</sup> Wolfgang Fritze, once dealing with the matter of tribute and ‘amicitia’ already in the Merovingian society, noticed that as early as in the 7th century in the West there were no such cases in which these two forms of bonding two political partners with each other existed simultaneously.<sup>250</sup> Even though the matter is not completely clear, the review

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in the German historiography: Albert Brackmann, *Magdeburg als Hauptstadt des deutschen Ostens im früheren Mittelalter* (Leipzig, 1937), p. 8f.

<sup>246</sup> Thietmar, p. 89 (2,29) ... *Hodo, venerabilis marchio, Miseenem inperatori fidelem tributumque usque in Varta fluvium solventem exercitu petivit collecto*; *The ‘Chronicon’*, p. 114; see: Labuda, *Studia nad początkami*, vol. 1, p. 481ff.

<sup>247</sup> See: Edward Rymar, “Terytorium usque in Vurta fluvium, czyli Pomorze obszarem trybutarym Niemiec za Mieszka I”, in *Biskupi, lennicy i żeglarze*, ed. Błażej Śliwiński, Gdańskie Studia z Dziejów Średniowiecza 9 (Gdańsk, 2003), pp. 189–226.

<sup>248</sup> The relationship between ‘friendship’ and tribute sometimes existed in the late antiquity and the early middle ages—Epp, *Amicitia. Zur Geschichte*, pp. 181ff., 210, 224f.; but these times differed from the feudal epoch, which the 10th century was.

<sup>249</sup> Epp, ‘Amicitia’. *Zur Geschichte* (index): the pact of *amicitia*, treated ‘honourably’ obliged the both parties to provide military and political support only.

<sup>250</sup> Wolfgang Fritze, “Die fränkische Schwurfreundschaft der Merowinger Zeit. Ihr Wesen und politische Funktion”, *ZRG Germ. Abt.* 71 (1954), 74–125, pp. 74ff., 111f.; also: Drabek, *Die Vorträge der fränkischen*, p. 186; see also: Gerard Labuda, *Pierwsze państwo słowiańskie. Państwo Samona* (Poznań, 1949), p. 266, note. 12; but: Marian Z. Jedlicki, *Stosunek prawny Polski do cesarstwa do roku 1000*, Poznańskie Towarzystwo Przyjaciół Nauk. Prace Komisji Historycznej 12, 2 (Poznań, 1939), p. 87ff., and: Nowacki, “Symbolika prawna zjazdów”, p. 13; also: Sochacki, *Stosunki publicznoprawne między*, p. 54f.

of Widukind's reports suggests that also this time Thietmar, questioning the high status and regard in which Boleslav Chrobry was held in the circle of the Saxon lords, intended to humiliate him by labelling the Piast the son of a tributary duke.

Of course, these remarks above do not suggest that Mieszko I was not, at one stage of his rule, indeed made to lay a tribute to the emperor. This fact, however, even if it had really happened, could have taken place long before 983, as the whole system of the empire's authority in the East was demolished after the victorious uprising of the Elbe Slavs. Besides, to our knowledge, after the mid 10th century, when the knightly ethos was born, a conviction prevailed already that a really noble man pays only with his blood.<sup>251</sup> This indeed implies that an institution of an organized friendship and a tribute must have been mutually exclusive, because of the question: how can one 'make friends' with somebody 'ignoble'?!

The problem under discussion can be further illustrated by an example of extending the authority of Saxon rulers over Bohemia. Widukind writes on Henry I's military expedition against duke Vaclav, which took place in 929, in the following words:

After that [the king] set off to Prague, the town of the Czechs, with his whole army and made their ruler to capitulate. [...] He was the brother of Boleslav, who remained loyal and useful to the emperor all the way through his life. After subjugating Bohemia and establishing a tribute, the king returned to Saxony.<sup>252</sup>

So we read about the loyalty achieved by a military predominance, but there is no mention of 'amicitia'. Similarly the quoted chronicler describes Boleslav's humiliation by Otto I in 950, after the siege of Prague.<sup>253</sup> Here, there is also no mention that a 'friendship' was established between the rulers.

It seems that Thietmar's intention was in fact to suggest that the emperor's supremacy over Mieszko I recalled the one which the empire of the Liudolfings had over the Czechs. By the same token, he unambiguously refuses to acknowledge Mieszko's status, precious and honorary, as the emperor's

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<sup>251</sup> More about the issue: Gerard Labuda, "Stosunki prawno-polityczne Polski i Niemiec w średniowieczu", in *Niemcy-Polska w średniowieczu*, ed. Jerzy Strzelczyk (Poznań, 1986), pp. 121–135, p. 132.

<sup>252</sup> *Widukind*, p. 68 (1,35): *Post haec Pragam adiit cum omni exercitu, Boemiorum urbem, regemque eius in deditionem accepit; [...]. Frater tamen erat Bolizlavi, qui quamdiu vixit imperatori fidelis et utilis mansit. Igitur rex Boemias tributarias faciens reversus est in Saxoniam.*

<sup>253</sup> *Widukind*, p. 134 (3,8): *Considerata itaque virtute regis ac innumera multitudine exercitus, Bolizlav urbe egressus maluit tantae maiestati subici quam ultimam perniciem pati. Sub signisque stans et regem audiens, responsaque reddens, veniam tandem promeruit.*

‘friend’, even though it had been documented by Widukind. Thietmar outlined his political programme towards the Piasts explicitly and emphatically in the passage of his chronicle, where he reacted angrily to the grants which Boleslav Chrobry was awarded by Otto III in 1000:

How unequally are our ancestors and our contemporaries compared! In the days of the illustrious Hodo, this man’s father, Mieszko, would not have dared to wear furs when entering a house in which he knew him to be or to sit while he was standing. May God forgive the emperor for making a lord out of a tributary and raising him so to the point that, forgetful [i.e. Boleslav Chrobry] of this father’s customs, he might dare to gradually drag his superiors into subjection.<sup>254</sup>

The cited passage directly refers to the chronicler’s reflection on the nature of the relations between Poland and the empire in 1000 and shortly after that, it indirectly expresses an opinion on the whole eastern policy of the empire. Its bottom line was that the Piasts should respect the superiority of even lesser German lords—the local margraves associated with the March of Meissen which Boleslav Chrobry claimed, and who in 1002 paid homage to the Polish ruler, which infuriated the chronicler so much.<sup>255</sup>

Let us remember that German aristocrats did not pay tributes to their ruler from their family estates and property on leasehold granted by the monarch, but they only served him on a basis later known as feudal allegiance; they assisted him in arms during a war and travelled in his retinue in times of peace.<sup>256</sup>

According to how he imagined the right attitude of the Piasts towards the east German aristocracy, the bishop of Merseburg composed the aforementioned description of the alleged conduct of Mieszko I in the presence of margrave Hodo. Usually, the message which this passage conveys is interpreted in terms of social conventions: so it was Mieszko who knew that one should not enter the stately hall wearing his outerwear as well as that one should not sit when the partner in conversation one respects stands up.<sup>257</sup> On

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<sup>254</sup> *The ‘Chronicon’*, p. 212; Thietmar, p. 263f.: *Quam inique comparandi sunt antecessores nostri et contemporales! Vivente egregio Hodone pater istius Miseco domum, qua eum esse sciebat, crusinatus intrare vel eo assurgente numquam presumpsit sedere. Deus indulgeat imperatori, quod tributarium faciens dominum ad hoc umquam elevavi oblita sui genitoris regula, semper sibi prepositos auderet in subiectionem paulatim detrahere [...] in servitutis liberatisque detrimentum capere.*

<sup>255</sup> See: chapter 2.2.2 and 2.3.4 of this book.

<sup>256</sup> Hans K. Schulze, *Grundstrukturen der Verfassung im Mittelalter*, vol. 1: *Stammesverband, Gefolgschaft, Lehenswesen, Grundherrschaft* (Stuttgart – Berlin – Köln, 1990), p. 54ff.

<sup>257</sup> See e.g.: Labuda, *Mieszko I*, p. 226f.; a reticent approach to the matter: Stefan Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024). Herrscher am Ende Zeiten* (Regensburg, 1999), p. 209f.



the other hand, the comparison made between Mieszko's manners and the times contemporary to the chronicler requires more caution in the interpretation of this phrase.

The meaning of this passage can be interpreted correctly only in the context of some other sources in Thietmar's times. Before beginning the analysis, let us pay some attention to Mieszko I's clothes, mentioned in the chronicle. This is a very important matter. In the epoch under discussion, the formal outfit of political figures, just like of other people, gave some important messages—much more important than today—and sometimes functioned as a relatively complex communiqué which determined the status, or even ambitions of some individuals.

To name the clothes of Mieszko, Thietmar used the word *crusina*. The matter is quite complicated, because this term meant all outerwear made from leather with fur, which was worn on top of other clothes, with no specifications given whether it was a sheepskin coat, or a fur coat made from skins of fur-covered animals. In the past, this former kind of outer garment was always regarded as particularly mediocre, typical of shepherds rather than of lords. Thus, if Mieszko really wore a sheepskin coat, Thietmar would certainly mention it, as another piece of evidence of the Piasts' inferior status and their Slavic lack of refinement.

Yet, if the word 'crusina' meant a 'fur coat', the whole sentence will show a different face. After all, until now the fur coat has maintained part of its old splendour and significance as a mark of dignity and wealth of the person who wears it. In the past, such an outfit, especially when it was made from skins of precious animals, indicated a great lord, symbolizing his affluence and prosperity,<sup>258</sup> and—in some contexts—this sort of outer garment was even associated with the king.<sup>259</sup>

Obviously, the meaning of the fur coat varied depending on the situation.<sup>260</sup> In the cited extract taken from the chronicle by Thietmar the author aimed

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<sup>258</sup> The fur = vitality and gods protection, wealth; see the ironic remark by Helmold that furs caused a deadly poison of pride among his contemporaries, and they were in demand, as if possessing them meant the ultimate happiness—*Helmoldi Presbyteri Bozoviensis*, p. 36, (1,1); see also: Mechthild Müller, *Die Kleidung nach Quellen des frühen Mittelalters. Textilien und Mode von Karl dem Großen bis Heinrich III.* (Berlin – New York, 2003), p. 84ff.

<sup>259</sup> It was furs, in addition to horses, shields, and spears, which were a customary, obligatory gift from numerous monasteries for their monarch—Claude, *Geschichte des Erzbistums*, p. 44.

<sup>260</sup> Gabrielle Raudszus, *Die Zeichensprache der Kleidung. Untersuchungen zur Symbolik des Gewandes in der deutschen Epik des Mittelalters* (Hildesheim, 1985), pp. 95ff., 114, 184; see also: Ilse Zander, "Zur Frage mittelalterlicher Gewandsymbolik", *Forschungen und Fortschritte* 32 (1958) 1, pp. 24–27.

to notify the reader that Mieszko had not wanted to elevate himself above others and had not insulted—it was common to regard the symbolic breaking of a hierarchy as discreditable to the dignity of those standing higher<sup>261</sup>—margrave Hodo with his attire. The remark made by Thietmar on the fact that Mieszko did not dare to sit while Hodo stood should be interpreted in a similar way—as a sign of a modest demeanour of the man who respected the status of the Saxon lord.

A certain language of gestures placed in the context of the hierarchy of sitting and standing up is well illustrated by one written source which, even though it came from a geographically remote area, belonged to a similar cultural circle and the same epoch. The passage from the chronicle by the Norman writer, Dudo of St. Quentin (d. 1026),<sup>262</sup> described a meeting of duke William Longsword with the German ruler, allegedly Henry I (the historian confused him for Otto I) at Attigny in 940.

The Norman chronicler insistently stressed the equal status of both political partners—it is noticeable in his account of the German king's behaviour. Having heard that William was approaching, he did not sit on his chair, but stood up and went to kiss the duke.<sup>263</sup> The extant medieval illustrative material also shows that sitting in the presence of other lords indicated the outranking of those who stood, or even the authority over them by the one who sat on the chair (throne).<sup>264</sup> For example, the famous Bayeux Tapestry contains the scenes with William, later the Conqueror, and the Anglo-Saxon earl, Harold Godwinson. Some of the scenes on the tapestry show these two men before 1066, when they had an opportunity to meet. Then Harold got to the court of the Norman duke and was William's guest and prisoner at the same time. The inequality of these two in terms of their status is shown by

<sup>261</sup> Witthöft, *Ritual und Text*, p. 67ff.

<sup>262</sup> *Dudonis sancti Quintini, De moribus et actis*, pp. 115–301; see also: Gian A. Bezzola, *Das Ottonische Kaisertum in der französischen Geschichtsschreibung des 10. und beginnenden 11. Jahrhunderts* (Graz-Köln, 1956), p. 177ff.; Norbert Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa der "nationes"*. *Nationalgeschichtliche Gesamtdarstellungen im Mittelalter* (Köln – Weimar – Wien, 1995), p. 81ff.

<sup>263</sup> *Dudonis sancti Quintini*, p. 197 (3,52): *Heinricus autem rex citius surrexit, et contra Guilelmum duce[m] obvius perrexit, osculoque dato uterque resedit.*—see: Bezzola, *Das Ottonische Kaisertum*, p. 186f.; also: cf. the attitude of Knut, the ruler of the Abodrites, towards his relative Niels, the king of Denmark—*Helmoldi Presbyteri Bosoviensis*, p. 190. (1,50).

<sup>264</sup> The chronicler Thietmar writes that when offerings were being made in Riedegost (Rethra), the oracle site of the Lutizi, the pagan priests were sitting while all the others were standing: *Thietmar*, p. 347f. (6,24); *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 253.

the image where William is sitting on the throne, whereas the Anglo-Saxon is standing.<sup>265</sup>

On our return to the aforementioned phrase by Thietmar on Mieszko I's manners, an observation should be made that this time also it perfectly suits his other opinions regarding the proper, in his view, attitude of the Piasts not only to the German rulers, but also to their representatives on the eastern periphery of the empire: margraves and counts.

It is remarkable here that Thietmar expressed his opinions on the Piasts after 1012 (or 1013),<sup>266</sup> when during Henry II's reign the alliance between the German rulers and the Polish dukes was broken off. Before that date, while both parties had cooperated, even though there had been certainly those within the Saxon elites who had contested the value of the Piast monarchs as allies of the state of the Liudolfings (in a way similar to the chronicler), this sort of political stance had not been approved of in the emperor's court.

To conclude, one can notice the existence of two concepts in the two German chronicles from the turn of the 10th and 11th centuries analysed here which regard the question of mutual relations between Germany and the state of the Piasts. The first was shown perfunctorily in the chronicle by Widukind. It suggested the inclusion of the Piast territorial power in the political system created by the empire, following the principle of acknowledging, at least conditionally, its high status. The external indicator of such 'honorary' conditions of dependence, similar to other tribal territorial powers (*regna*) in the state would be the pact of 'amicitia', which would link the emperor with the Piast ruler, with the German monarch himself not demanding from his partner any other dues than a military aid and the participation in the state's conventions, not to mention, which is obvious in this case, cooperation and political compliance.<sup>267</sup>

On the other hand, Thietmar represents a different approach towards the problem of the integration process between the empire and its eastern neigh-

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<sup>265</sup> E.g: Wolfgang Grape, *The Bayeux Tapestry. Monument to the Norman Triumph* (Munich – New York, 1994), p. 106f.; p. 117; but also: pp. 100, 91, 97, 103, 107, 117, 120, 123, 124, 141, 143.

<sup>266</sup> *Thietmara*, p. 31ff. (Introduction by Marian Z. Jedlicki); see also: *Thietmar von Merseburg, Chronik*, ed. Werner Trillmich, AQDGM vol. 9 (Berlin, 1957), p. 25 (Introduction).

<sup>267</sup> Tyszkiewicz, "Wschodni sąsiedzi Niemiec", wrote (p. 6)—aptly, perhaps slightly exaggerating—that Widukind despised the Slavs, and further on—this view cannot be accepted—that the term 'amicus imperatoris' was full of irony.

bours, including Poland.<sup>268</sup> According to this author, Slavic territorial powers, if they were allowed to exist independently at all, should be subordinate not directly to the emperor himself, but to the dignitaries of the empire: margraves and counts. This dependence would be expressed not only by a military aid delivered to the emperor and his dignitaries, but also a tribute. In this, in a sense indirect way, the Serb and Lusatian tribes were brought under control of the empire and so similarly was Bohemia at the close of the 10th century, which latter state was at that time weakened by the power crisis among the Premislids and simultaneous growth in power of the margrave of Meissen, Ekkehard.<sup>269</sup>

### 1.3 TITLES OF POWER OF DUKE MIESZKO I

To our knowledge, the state of the Piasts appeared within the vision of the elites of the Liudolfing dynasty just before the mid 960s. Around that time it was already discerned by the emperor's court as an interesting partner for a political game played on the eastern periphery of the empire. This image of the Piasts was made possible thanks to their relative power and the conflict with the Veleti, the enemies of Saxony. The military capacity of the Elbe tribes, despite being diminished by the Liudolfings several times,<sup>270</sup> was never completely broken, therefore their opponents turned out to be the empire's precious ally.

It is interesting to examine how the German elites perceived Mieszko I within the above outlined context and how they tried to describe and situate his state inside the structure of the world they knew; he was a man representing a slightly different world, yet still an ally. A few accounts are at our disposal, which apart from mentioning Mieszko in the context of some political news described him in a more detailed way, still quite laconically, by labeling him, in their own views, according to his status and political values.

<sup>268</sup> Sometimes the chronicler wrote with sympathy about the Slavs, if it was not inconsistent with his political ideas; see: Tyszkiewicz, "Wschodni sąsiedzi Niemiec", p. 9.

<sup>269</sup> Gabrielle Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von Meißen, und ihre Beziehungen zum Reich und zu den Piasten*, Europäische Hochschulschriften, Reihe 3: Geschichte und ihre Hilfswissenschaften vol. 691 (Frankfurt am Main, 1996), p. 54ff.; Josef Žemlička, "Expansie, krize a obnova Čech v letech 935–1055. (K systémovým proměnám raných států ve střední Evropě)", *Český časopis Historický* 93 (1995), 205–222; Walter Schlesinger, *Kirchengeschichte Sachsens im Mittelalter*, vol. I: *Von den Anfängen kirchlicher Verkündigung bis zum Ende des Investiturstreites* (Köln – Graz, 1962), p. 70ff.

<sup>270</sup> Wienfrid Schich, "Die ostelbische Kulturlandschaft des 10. und 12. Jahrhunderts im Vergleich", in *Polen und Deutschland*, pp. 61–89.

The particular significance of the sources used in this part of our work is, among other things, that they document more than only a simple perception of the Piast ruler. The point is that some of them reflect the opinions of the elites which were formed in reaction to specific actions taken by Mieszko I—which is especially important here—in order to improve his image and prestige. The analysis of this material allows us to investigate the political and cultural consciousness of the Piast ruler and his court.

### 1.3.1 Quidam dux Wandalorum, Misico nomine<sup>271</sup>

The oldest extant example of the titles of power applied to Mieszko I is brought to us by the chronicle of Widukind, which has already been cited a number of times. The Saxon historian mentioned only once, in addition to the name of the duke of Poland, his title of power. At that time he applied the term ‘rex’ in order to emphasize the rank of the Slavic monarch.<sup>272</sup> This expression can be directly translated as ‘king’,<sup>273</sup> Nevertheless, the problem of the exact meaning of the word used by Widukind is more intricate. After all, already in the 10th century the royal title began to be associated with a specific, quite complex symbolic sphere of its Christian nature which linked the king—the ruler decorated with a sacral insignia: the crown<sup>274</sup> and the ecclesiastical anointment<sup>275</sup>—with Christ, who ideologically justified the prerogatives of the monarch so addressed.<sup>276</sup>

Mieszko I did not possess the crown, and there is no information in sources to suggest that he even attempted to have one. It does not seem possible at all that the chronicler understood the position of the Polish duke—at that time still a pagan, as the expression concerned the year 963—the same way the

<sup>271</sup> Gerhard von Augsburg, *Vita Sancti Uodalrici. Die älteste Lebensbeschreibung des heiligen Ulrich*, eds. Walter Berschin, Angelika Häse (Heidelberg, 1993), p. 380 (2,22).

<sup>272</sup> *Widukind*, p. 170, (3,66).

<sup>273</sup> Karol Jasiński, *Rodowód pierwszych Piastów* (Warszawa, 1992), p. 58; Strzelczyk, *Mieszko Pierwszy*, p. 81.

<sup>274</sup> Joachim Ott, *Krone und Krönung. Die Verheißung und Verleihung von Kronen in der Kunst von der Spätantike bis um 1200 und die geistige Auslegung der Krone* (Mainz, 1998), p. 63ff.; Reinhart Staats, *Teologie der Reichskrone. Ottonische ‘Renovatio imperia’ im Spiegel einer Insignie* (Stuttgart, 1976), p. 131ff.

<sup>275</sup> Josef Funkenstein, “Unction of the Ruler”, in *Adel und Kirche*, pp. 6–14; Arnold Angenendt, “*Rex et sacerdos*. Zur Genese der Königssalbung”, in *Tradition als historische Kraft*, eds. Lutz E. von Padberg, Norbert Kamp, Joachim Wollasch (Berlin, 1982), pp. 100–118.

<sup>276</sup> Ernst Kantorowicz, *The Kings of two Bodies. A Study in Medieval Political Theology*, Princeton 1957, p. 46ff.; Robert Desham, “Christus rex et magi reges: Kingship and Christology in Ottonian and Anglo-Saxon Art”, *FMS* (1976), 367–406, p. 381ff.; more about this issue—chapter 3.3 and 3.4 of this work.

power of the Frankish kings was perceived. So in Widukind's view the term 'rex' most probably meant only the 'administrator' or somebody 'executing power', which is indeed associated with the etymology of this Latin title.<sup>277</sup> In the early Middle Ages this word was quite often used in this context to name rulers in general, not distinguishing whether they were Christians or pagans, sovereign monarchs or not.<sup>278</sup> It only sometimes happened that the writer who felt his superiority over the monarch of the people he described used the contemptuous diminutive form 'kinglet' (*regulus*).<sup>279</sup>

There is no—as sometimes happens—justification to think that this title, used to name Mieszko I, indicated an esteem, or respect which the chronicler would personally have for him.<sup>280</sup> The high opinion noticeable in one part of the work, in the passage describing Wichman's death, was the consequence of the author's narration, in which—without the writer's intentional interest in Mieszko I—the information was placed about the duke as 'the emperor's friend'. As a matter of fact, the Polish ruler, as is distinctly proven by the first in a series of the 'Piaśt' passages in the work by the monk of Corvey, remained for the chronicler an alien, only slightly recognized and accepted.

Most of the narratives which were written after the work by Widukind usually and quite consequently addressed the Polish ruler as 'dux',<sup>281</sup> which has always been translated as 'duke', but according to the etymology of this word, this translation should be in fact understood as 'chieftain' or even 'voivod'. This is to say that this term was applied to those who commanded,

<sup>277</sup> Du Cange, *Glossarum mediae et infimae*, vol. 7, p. 178ff.

<sup>278</sup> Widukind also addressed Boleslav of Bohemia as 'king', even though the latter recognized the authority of the ruler of the Reich and paid him a tribute—*Widukind*, p. 68 (1,35) see also: František Graus, "Rex-dux Moraviae", *Sborník Práci Filosofické Fakulty Brněnské University* 9 (1960), 181–190.

<sup>279</sup> Du Cange, *Glossarum mediae et infimae*, vol. 7, p. 101f.; Ludger Körntgen, "Königtum, Adel und Kirche: Das ottonische Reich im 10. Jahrhundert", in *The Neighbours of Poland*, pp. 79–109, p. 81; see also: Sowa, Reisinger, *Das Ethnicon Sclavi*, (according to the index); Christian Lübke, "Herrschaftsrepräsentation und—imitation im Wechselspiel zwieschen Karolingern und Slaven in der Zeit Karls des Großen und Ludwigs des Frommen", in *Słowiańszczyzna w Europie średniowiecznej. Księga pamiątkowa dla Lecha Leciejewicza*, ed. Zofia Kurnatowska, vol. 1: *Plemiona i wczesne państwa* (Wrocław, 1996), pp. 105–112.

<sup>280</sup> Gerard Labuda, "O godności króla i instytucji królestwa", in *Przemysł II. Odnowienie Królestwa Polskiego*, ed. Jadwiga Krzyżaniakowa (Poznań, 1997), pp. 27–56, p. 45—this differentiation is not taken into consideration; similarly: Gerard Labuda, "Rozprzestrzenianie się tytułu 'króla' wśród Słowian", in *Wiek średnie—Medium aevum. Prace ofiarowane T. Manteufflowi w 60 rocznicę urodzin*, eds. Aleksander Gieysztor, Marian H. Serejski, Stanisław Trawkowski (Warszawa, 1962), pp. 57–77, p. 59; see also: Stanisław Rosik, "Początki Polski w kronikach niemieckich X–XI w. (w kręgu wiadomości Widukinda z Korwei)", in *Kolory i struktury średniowiecza*, ed. Wojciech Fałkowski (Warszawa, 2004), pp. 235–252.

<sup>281</sup> Apart from Helmold, who called Boleslav Chrobry *Poleniorum christianissimus rex—Helmoldi Chronica Slavorum*, p. 80 (1,15).

also in a political sense, groups of warriors, and led them to the battle.<sup>282</sup> At the same time this expression did not necessarily mean someone inferior to the king, as one reads, for example, in the text by Widukind that both ‘dux’ and ‘rex’ can occur as synonyms.<sup>283</sup> The meaning of the title is determined by the context in which it appears. In the case of Mieszko I this title should be understood neutrally—‘dux’ simply meant a ruler, with no reference to his status.

There is a record among the accounts that addressed Mieszko as ‘dux’ which refers to probably the oldest devotional link between the Polish ruler and a Church institution. It is one of the chapters in the description of the miracles which allegedly happened thanks to Saint Ulrich (a. k. a. Odalrici) in Augsburg, where the cult of this saint began to form in the 980s. The *miracula*, attached to the life of the saint, mention that Mieszko was hurt in his arm by a poisoned arrow. The wound did not want to heal and became life-threatening. Then the duke made a vow that he would send to Augsburg a silver cast of his arm if St. Ulrich helped him fully recover. Soon after that, the wound began to heal, so the duke fulfilled his commitment after going back home; the *votum* of the Piast monarch got to the sanctuary of the Augsburg saint.<sup>284</sup>

This above cited message was not dated; therefore it is not known when Mieszko contacted the Bavarian centre. This account was once interpreted as a religious confirmation of the political alliance of Mieszko and the Czech

<sup>282</sup> The Bohemian ‘vevoda’ to name St. Vaclaus—the German ‘He/e/rzog’—see: Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm, *Deutsches Wörterbuch*, vol. 4, 2 (Lepizig, 1877), p. 1255f.; and: Walther Kienast, *Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich und Deutschland; 9. bis 12. Jahrhundert* (München – Wien, 1968); Hans-Werner Goetz, “Dux” und “Ducatus”. *Begriffs- und Verfassungsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Entstehung des sogenannten “jüngeren” Stammesherzogtums an der Wende vom neunten zum zehnten Jahrhundert*, Bochum 1976; Siegfried Lüpke, *Die Markgrafen der Sächsischen Ostmarken in der Zeit von Gero bis zum Beginn des Investiturstreites, <940–1075>* (Halle, 1937), p. 7f.; Graus, “Rex-dux Moraviae”, p. 184.

<sup>283</sup> E.g.: Widukind addressed Otto I in the same sequence of his chronicle as “dux”, “rex” and “princeps”—Widukind, p. 84ff. (2,1).

<sup>284</sup> *Alio quoque tempore quidam dux Wandalorum, misico nomine cum sagitta toxicata in brachium vulneratus est. Qui cum sentiret sese veneno nocivo esse percussus et sibi inminere mortis interitum eadem hora putaret cum magna fide et constantia votum vovit ut brachium argenteum cum manu quam citius potuisset ad sanctum Uodalricum mittere non differret. Qui statim post votum relevatus a periculo ad domum suam rediit et brachium secundum suum votum componere praecepit. Cumque fabri brachium fabricare coepissent et manum in eo fingerent dux continuo de imminente periculo liberatus surrexit deum laudans qui eum per merita sui sancti episcopi de periculo mortis liberavit votum suum perficiens mittendo brachium cum manu ad viri sancti sepulchrum—Gerhard von Augsburg, p. 380, (2,22); see also: Przemysław Wiszewski, *Domus Boleslai’. Values and Social Identity in Dynastic Traditions of Medieval Poland: c. 966–1138* (Leiden, 2010), p. 476ff.*

Boleslav with the Bavarian duke Henry II the Quarrelsome. This view is supported by the fact that the note on the Piast in the collection of the miracles of St. Ulrich was placed directly after the passage on the healing of the Czech ducal couple's ill son.<sup>285</sup> And we know that, from 965 onwards, that is the year of the marriage of Mieszko I with Dobrawa (Dąbrówka), the alliance with the Premislids was an important component of Mieszko I's foreign policy. This partnership was not interrupted by the death of Boleslav I (in 967 or 973), and later also his daughter, wife of Polish ruler (977).<sup>286</sup>

We know that in the 10th century Bavarian dukes were in effect natural allies of the Czech dukes—the partnerships were usually cemented by their rivalry with the Saxon Liudolfings.<sup>287</sup> Boleslav II provided a significant and loyal support for Henry the Quarrelsome in each of his rebellions, firstly against Otto II between 973–974, and later against his juvenile son Otto III between 983–985.<sup>288</sup>

The information has been preserved that Mieszko I supported Henry the Quarrelsome in both conflicts, just like his Czech ally.<sup>289</sup> As time went by, however, this alliance ceased to be advantageous for the Piasts, because of a growing co-operation between the Czechs and also, to a point, the Bavarians, and the Baltic Slavs, by that time the traditional opponents of the Piasts.

Winning the support of the Piasts increasingly became a matter of urgency also for the state of the Liudolfings, especially when the Saxon periphery came under permanent threat from the Elbe Slavs after the uprising of 983. In addition, the urgency of the issue resulted from the fact that Otto II engaged himself more and more in Italian problems—and he was additionally troubled by the conflicts with the Bavarians and the Czechs.<sup>290</sup>

<sup>285</sup> Teresa Dunin-Wąsowicz, "Kulty świętych w Polsce w X w.", in *Polska w świecie. Szkice z dziejów kultury polskiej*, ed. Jerzy Dowiat (Warszawa, 1972), pp. 61–77, p. 62ff.; differently: Banaszkiwicz, "Mieszko I i władcy", p. 107f.

<sup>286</sup> Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder*, p. 24ff.

<sup>287</sup> František Graus, "Böhmen zwischen Bayern und Sachsen. Zur böhmischen Kirchengeschichte des 10. Jahrhunderts", *Historica* 17 (1969), 5–42.

<sup>288</sup> Erkens, "Fürstliche Opposition in", p. 338ff.; see also: Joanna A. Sobiesiak, *Bolesław II Przemysłida, † 999* (Kraków, 2006), p. 43ff.

<sup>289</sup> Labuda, "Mieszko I", p. 139ff.

<sup>290</sup> Manfred Hellmann, "Die Ostpolitik Kaiser Ottos II.", in *Syntagma Friburgense. Historische Studien Hermann Aubin dargebracht zum 70. Geburtstag am 23.12.1955* (Lindau – Kostanz, 1956), pp. 49–123; Hubertus Seibert, "Eines grossen Vaters glücklose Sohn? Die neue Politik Ottos II.", in *Ottotonische Neuanfänge. Symposium zur Ausstellung "Otto der Grosse, Magdeburg und Europa"*, eds. Bernd Schneidmüller, Stephen Weinfurter (Mainz, 2001), pp. 293–320; Odilo Engels, "Theophanu—die westliche Kaiserin aus dem Osten", in *Die Begegnung des Westen*, pp. 13–36, p. 22ff.



The Polish—Saxon alliance was formed already after the first rebellion of the Quarrelsome had ended. In 979 the bond was strengthened by Mieszko's marriage with Oda, the daughter of Dietrich, the margrave of the Northern March.<sup>291</sup> Otto II's premature death terminated the coalition. The dead monarch's son, Otto III, who was designated to become his ultimate successor, could not rule as a three year old child. In these circumstances Henry the Quarrelsome made a demand to be the regent on behalf of the underage prince. In order to execute his plan, he managed to capture the emperor's child.<sup>292</sup> The German lords formed two opposing factions. The Bavarian duke was backed by Boleslav of Bohemia, who had always been well disposed towards him. In this case, Mieszko I, protecting himself, did the same. At Easter of 984, during the convention in Quedlinburg, the Premislid, the Piast ruler, and Mistui the Abodrite, together with a certain number of German aristocrats, recognized him as king.<sup>293</sup>

Unfortunately, the would-be monarch had some powerful opponents. Both the mother and grandmother of almost four-year-old Otto III, who had been at variance with one another before, reacted unanimously in support of the rights of the child already crowned the king. Theophanu and Adelheid were backed by the archbishop of Mainz, Willigis, and a number of secular dignitaries, who were represented in the east, for example, by the Saxon duke Bernhard I and Ekkehard, future margrave of Meissen.<sup>294</sup> Outnumbered by his enemies, Henry the Quarrelsome gave in and released Otto III, recognizing his rights to the crown. This act was performed at the convention in Rohr, in September 984.<sup>295</sup> According to the sources, some unknown representatives of the Slavs were present at that time.<sup>296</sup> Some scholars guess that it was Mieszko I, or at least his envoys, who took part in the convention.<sup>297</sup> After all, some sources report that military assistance was provided for the Saxons

<sup>291</sup> Danuta Borawska, "Mieszko i Oda w gronie *consanguineorum* Ludolfingów", in *Spółeczeństwo Polski Średniowiecznej*, vol. 1, (Warszawa, 1981), pp. 11–39.

<sup>292</sup> Franz-Reiner Erkens, "more *Grecorum conregnantem instituere vultis?* Zur Legitimation der Regenschafft Heinrichs des Zänkers im Thronstreit von 984", *FMS* 27 (1993), 273–289; Althoff, *Otto III*, p. 37ff.; Johannes Fried, "Kaiserin Theophanu und das Reich", in *Köln. Stadt und Bistum in Kirche und Reich des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Odilo Engels zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Hans Vollrath, Stefan Weinfurter, Kölner Historische Abhandlungen 39 (Köln – Weimar – Wien, 1993), pp. 139–185, p. 166ff.

<sup>293</sup> *RGSEO*, vol. 3, p. 27f. (no. 228), 228f., no. 163.

<sup>294</sup> Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von*, p. 50ff.

<sup>295</sup> Thietmar, p. 155 (48); *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 154, see: Althoff, *Otto III*, p. 47ff.

<sup>296</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, ed. Martina Giese, MGH SS RG i.u.s. 72 (Hannover, 2004), p. 472, a. 984.

<sup>297</sup> Sobiesiak, *Bolesław II Przemyślida*, p. 72ff.

in their expedition against the Slavs, which took place in 985.<sup>298</sup> It remains unclear, however, which Slavic people they meant in particular. There are opinions that it was Mieszko I who helped Ekkehard capture Meissen, formerly occupied by the troops of Boleslav II.<sup>299</sup> The fact is that around 985 the long lasting alliance between the Poles and the Czechs was indeed broken off, and subsequently wars began which ended in the defeat of the Premislid ruler and his loss of authority over Little Poland and Silesia.<sup>300</sup>

Consequently, if we accept that there was a connection between a devotional act of Mieszko I, which linked him with the Augsburg saint, and his political alliance with the Bavarian duke and Boleslav II of Bohemia who supported the latter, the Piast duke's contacts with the sanctuary of St. Ulrich would have to date back to early 985, when the alliance was finally broken off. In this period the *sacrum* usually augmented the significance of a political alliance. In the search for the origins of the alliance formed between the Piast and the Bavarian duke the situation of 974 comes as the first in a series of events, when Mieszko I, Henry the Quarrelsome, and Boleslav of Bohemia jointly acted against Otto II.<sup>301</sup> It was then that Mieszko's votive offering to the newly acclaimed saint could have taken place. Similar circumstances occurred during the second rebellion of the Bavarian duke, when he was proclaimed German king in Quedlinburg in 984.<sup>302</sup>

The first date, however, is far too early as Ulrich died in 973, and the first traces of his cult are not seen before 978, when the civil war in Germany came to an end after Henry the Quarrelsome took up arms.<sup>303</sup> At that time the bishop of Augsburg, Henry (973–982), who aided the rebels, humbled himself before Otto II (*deditio*), and after regaining the emperor's favour, he could return to his see.<sup>304</sup> It was not until the end of 982 when Gerhard,

<sup>298</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 472, a. 985.

<sup>299</sup> Herbert Ludat, "Piastowie i Ekkehardynowie", *Przegląd Historyczny* 131 (2000), 181–201, p. 193ff.

<sup>300</sup> Gerard Labuda, "Czeskie chrześcijaństwo na Śląsku i w Małopolsce w X i XI wieku", in *Chryścianizacja Polski południowej. Materiały z sesji naukowej odbytej 29 czerwca 1993 roku* (Kraków, 1994), pp. 73–98; Fried, "Kaiserin Theophanu und das Reich", p. 170ff.

<sup>301</sup> Dunin-Łasowicz, "Kulty świętych w".

<sup>302</sup> Thietmar, p. 146ff. (4,2); *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 150.

<sup>303</sup> Dirk Alvermann, *Königsherrschaft und Reichsintegration. Eine Untersuchung zur politischen Struktur von regna und imperium zur Zeit Kaiser Ottos II. (976), 973–983*, *Berliner Historische Studien* 28 (Berlin, 1998), p. 187f.

<sup>304</sup> Thietmar, p. 118f., (3,7); see also: Gerd Althoff, *Die Ottonen. Königsherrschaft ohne Staat* (Stuttgart – Berlin – Köln, 2000), p. 141; and Gerd Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien im Spiegel ihrer Memorialüberlieferungen. Studien zum Totengedanken der Billunger und Ottonen*, *Münstersche Mittelalterschriften* 47 (München, 1984), p. 96f., Franz-Josef Jakobi, "Die geistlichen und weltlichen Magnaten in den Fuldaer Totenannalen", in *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von*

the vicar of the Augsburg chapter, began to work on the life of St. Ulrich,<sup>305</sup> which in fact was the result of an increasing popularity of the movement to canonize the bishop. There was little progress made in this matter during the pontificate of Etich (982–988), but the process of canonizing Ulrich accelerated during the tenure of the next bishop of Augsburg, Liudolf (988–996). It was then that the text of *Vita S. Oudalrici* was completed around 991, and after that, thanks to the efforts made by the bishop, the text was introduced to the officials at the papal curia in the Lateran, where in February 993 the first ever public announcement concerning the canonization of this saint was made by the pope.<sup>306</sup>

If we were to hold on to the thesis on the origins of the devotional link of Mieszko I with the Bavarian sanctuary through the agency of Bohemia, the time of this contact would have to be somewhat associated with a similar relation established by Boleslav II and his wife. In the Czech case we have a certain premise which allows us to determine when the contacts of the ducal couple of Bohemia with the centre of the cult of St. Ulrich took place. Here we know that Boleslav had a son who was given the name Ulrich, which had been non-existent within the dynasty before. It seems to be obvious that there is a connection between the appearance of this name in the family of the Premislids and the miraculous healing of Boleslav II's son mentioned by the author of the *Miracula S. Oudalrici*.<sup>307</sup> The source tells us about an infant, yet it remains unclear when exactly this Ulrich was born, and scholars believe it happened sometime between 973 and 985.<sup>308</sup>

Having considered the realities of war and late appearance of the cult, the establishing of the link of the Bohemian court with Augsburg does not seem possible before 978, that is to say the capitulation of the insurgents to the emperor. Therefore, we have to assume that also the ties of Mieszko I with Augsburg were established sometime between 978 and 985.

It seems that in the past some scholars made their assumptions too hastily saying that there was a political agreement behind the entries in the *Miracula*

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*Fulda im früheren Mittelalter*, ed. Karl Schmid, vol. 1–3, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften 8/1 (München, 1978), vol. 2/2, Exkurs 2: *Die Gefallenen der Schlacht bei Cotrone in den Fuldaer Totenannalen*, pp. 872–876, p. 873f.

<sup>305</sup> Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil*, p. 128ff.; *Gerhard von Augsburg*, p. 11.

<sup>306</sup> Markus Ries, "Heiligenverehrung und Heiligensprechung in der Alten Kirche und im Mittelalter. Zur Entwicklung des Kanonisationsverfahrens", in *Bischof Ulrich von Augsburg 890–973. Seine Zeit—sein Leben—seine Verehrung*, ed. Manfred Weitlauff (Weißenhorn, 1993), pp. 143–167.

<sup>307</sup> *Gerhard von Augsburg*, p. 376ff. (2,21).

<sup>308</sup> Dušan Třeštík, "Nejstarší Přemyslovci ve světle přírodovědeckého a historického zkoumání", *Československý Časopis Historický* 31 (1983), 233–255.

that concerned the Bohemian ducal couple and Mieszko I, which linked the Piast to the Czech dynasty and Henry the Quarrelsome. It may as well be thought that the editor of the source only grouped the miracles according to their nature and category of the people listed there, and that is why Mieszko was placed next to Boleslav II of Bohemia. This problem cannot be solved definitely. Nevertheless, there are a number of circumstances which challenge the thesis on the Bohemian mediation in the establishing of the devotional link between the Piast and Augsburg.

Let us begin with the most general issue. We should notice that St. Ulrich would have been a doubtful choice as the patron of the alliance of Henry the Quarrelsome and the Slavic dukes. This is because Augsburg, which at present is a Bavarian city, in the period under discussion belonged to the Duchy of Swabia. Even though this centre was sited near the border, it was outside the political influence of the duke of Bavaria. Moreover, the participation of bishop Henry in the first rebel of the Quarrelsome is of little significance in the context of our matter, as at that time the above mentioned cult had not commenced yet, or at least the Church hierarch was not interested in propagating it. The diocese of St. Ulrich was part of the metropolitan union of Mainz,<sup>309</sup> not the Bavarian archbishopric of Salzburg.

It was Henry I who awarded the bishopric to Ulrich in 923, and the saint to-be, actively participating in the political life of his country, always remained a subject loyal to the main branch of the Liudolfing dynasty.<sup>310</sup> This was the case when, for example, during the reign of Otto I between 953 and 954, a rebellion of his son, Liudolf, broke out.<sup>311</sup> Despite the fact that the majority of the elites in southern Germany supported the rebels, the bishop backed the king.<sup>312</sup> Similarly, when soon after that, in 955, the state of Otto I was affected by a threatening invasion of the Hungarians, the metropolitan of Augsburg assisted the monarch by organizing an efficient defence of the

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<sup>309</sup> The Church superior of the bishop of Augsburg was usually the most trusted dignitary of the emperor among the whole episcopate of the Reich because it was customary that he held the post of arch-chancellor—Egon Boshof, “Köln, Mainz, Trier—Die Auseinandersetzung um die Spitzenstellung im deutschen Episkopat in ottonisch-salischer Zeit”, *Jahrbuch des Kölnischer Geschichtsvereins* 1978, 19–48.

<sup>310</sup> Manfred Weitlauff, “Bischof Ulrich von Augsburg (923–973). Leben und Wirken eines Reichsbischofs der ottonischen Zeit”, in *Bischof Ulrich von Augsburg*, p. 69ff.

<sup>311</sup> Born by his second wife—Edith, Anglo-Saxon duchess: Karl Leyser, “Die Ottonen und Wessex”, *FMS* 17, (1983), pp. 73–97, 75ff.; about the uprising: Althoff, *Die Ottonen. Königsherrschaft*, p. 96ff.

<sup>312</sup> Manfred Weitlauff, “Der heilige Bischof Udalrich von Augsburg (890—4 Juli 973)“; in: *Bischof Ulrich von Augsburg*, pp. 1–48, p. 36ff.

town.<sup>313</sup> The life of St. Ulrich lacks any really significant ties that could link him with the Bavarian strain of the Liudolfings.

On the other hand, we know that during the tenure of the successor of the saint bishop, Henry (973–982), who was a supporter of the Bavarian duke Henry the Quarrelsome as well as a participant of the uprising against Otto II in 973–978,<sup>314</sup> no interest on the side of the bishop in the cult of St. Ulrich can be traced. It only happened later, after 978, when Bishop Henry, acting on an external impulse that came from the emperor's court, provided care for the developing cult. As a matter of fact, it was Liudolf (989–996) who took some serious steps towards the canonization of his predecessor in the bishop's see. After his petition, the pope ordered an investigation of the miracles, and later on, at a special synod in Rome, the evidence of the bishop's holiness was presented and formally recognized with the bull of 3rd February 993.<sup>315</sup>

The only visible shadow over the relations of the emperor with the holy bishop was the ruler's objection to Ulrich's designation of his successors: first his nephew Adalbero, next his other relative—Werner,<sup>316</sup> the abbot of Fulda. Yet these facts did not mean that towards the end of Otto I's life an open conflict took place between the monarch and the bishop of Augsburg.<sup>317</sup> In addition, we know that the emperor's family were keenly interested in the proliferation of the cult of St. Ulrich. This is proven by an early start of the cult of St. Ulrich in Halberstadt (around 982, even before the official announcement of the canonization by the pope); the Augsburg saint received, on the emperor's initiative, his own altar in the Saxon cathedral, next to

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<sup>313</sup> Thietmar, pp. 214–215 (4,51); *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 188; *Gerhard von Augsburg*, p. 194 (1,12); Charles R. Bowlus, *The Battle at Lechfeld and its Aftermath, August 955. The End of the Age of Migrations in the Latin West* (Aldershot, 2006), p. 14ff. passim.

<sup>314</sup> Thietmar, pp. 118–119, (3,7); *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 132. However, the bishop died during Otto II's expedition to Calabria. On family relations of bishop Henry—see: Karl Bruner, *Österreichische Geschichte 907–1156. Herzogtümer und Marken vom Ungarsturm bis ins 12. Jahrhundert* (Wien, 1994), p. 55.

<sup>315</sup> It is sometimes thought to have been the first canonization process: Renate Klausner, "Zur Entwicklung des Heiligensprechungsverfahrens bis zum 13. Jahrhundert", *ZRG Kan. Abt.* 40 (1954), 85–101, p. 91f.

<sup>316</sup> Werner was a cousin of bishop Ulrich of Augsburg. The bishop also appears in the obituary of Fulda: Hans-Peter Wehlt, *Reichsabtei und König dargestellt am Beispiel der Abtei Lorsch mit Ausblicken auf Hersfeld, Stablo und Fulda*, Veröffentlichungen des Max-Planck-Instituts für Geschichte 28 (Göttingen, 1970), p. 278.

<sup>317</sup> Friedrich Zoepfl, "Bischof Ulrich von Augsburg und das Mönchtum", in *Bischof Ulrich von Augsburg*, pp. 65–74.

St. Maurice.<sup>318</sup> There is a belief that the placing of the three saints, who were considered to be militant patrons of the empire in this 'frontline' bishopric, adjacent to the restless borderland with the Slavic territories, was connected with the attempt to strengthen the periphery of the state of Otto II in the face of the expedition to Italy in preparation.<sup>319</sup> Besides, the German monarch aimed to protect the influences of Christianity in the region through the foundation of a monastery in Memleben, which—as it is supposed—was to be a great missionary centre, and whose vicar, Unger, became the second Polish bishop in 984.<sup>320</sup>

In this place we can find a significant, cultural justification for Mieszko I's devotional link with the growing, thanks to the emperor's involvement, cult of St. Ulrich. We know that precisely after 979 when Mieszko married a margrave's daughter, Oda, the cooperation between the Polish ruler and the Saxons intensified. The possible participation of Mieszko I in the fights against the Slavic Elbe tribes, who in 983 started an uprising and posed a threat not only to Saxony, but also to the interests of the Piast state, would have been a logical consequence of such an alliance.<sup>321</sup> The Piast duke, wounded by a poisoned, 'pagan' (?) arrow, would have perfectly fit as the object of the miracle performed by St. Ulrich, who was then promoted to be 'the homeland's defender'. Mieszko's healing could have won its due renown, which was needed both by him, a newly-baptized Christian who craved recognition among the elites of the empire, and by the Saxon aristocrats whose spirits had suffered after their defeats in the fights against the Slavs.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> In 992 the relics of St. Stephen were transferred from Metz to Halberstadt so that they should protect the town and its surroundings from the Slavs, just as they were once supposed to guard Metz from the Huns—Wolfgang Petke, "Sachsen und Slaven um das Jahr 1000", in *Bernward von Hildesheim und das Zeitalter der Ottonen*, eds. Michael Brandt, Arne Eggebrecht, vol. 1. (Meinz, 1993), pp. 217–224, p. 218.

<sup>319</sup> Banaszkiwicz, "Mieszko I i władcy", p. 109: Ulrich himself was called *defensor patriae* because of his successful defence of Augsburg from the Hungarians in 955.

<sup>320</sup> Günter Wolf, "Das Marienkloster zu Memleben", *Archiv für Diplomatik. Schriftgeschichte Siegel- und Wapenkunde* 41 (1995), 21–30; Johannes Fried, "Die Frauen und die politische Macht in 10. Jahrhundert oder die Gründung des Kloster Memleben", *Sachsen und Anhalt* 20 (1997), 29–48.

<sup>321</sup> RGSEO 3, p. 25f., no. 227.

<sup>322</sup> Lorenz Weinrich, "Der Slawenaufstand von 983 in der Darstellung des Bischofs Thietmar von Merseburg", in *Historiographia medievalis. Studien zur Geschichtschreibung und Quellenkunde des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Franz-Josef Schmale zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Dieter Berg, Hans-Werner Goetz (Darmstadt, 1988), pp. 77–102; Wolfgang Fritze, "Der slawische Aufstand von 983—eine Schicksalwende in der Geschichte Mitteleuropas", in *Festschrift der landesgeschichtliche Vereinigung für die Mark Brandenburg zu ihrem hundertjährigen Bestehen* (Berlin, 1984), pp. 9–55; Brüske, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte*, p. 39ff.

All these quoted circumstances greatly diminish, if not deny completely the possibility of a connection between the note from the collection of miracles of St. Ulrich and the alliance between the Bavarians, Czechs, and Poles which existed before 984. However, they significantly augment the reliability of assumptions that there was a pact between Mieszko and Otto II, which formed the basis of this record. This conclusion must end our considerations regarding the origins of the cited entry; there is one more interesting question which is associated with its content that we should focus on.

Mieszko was addressed in the miracles, quite oddly, as the duke of the Vandals (*dux Wandalorum*). The interesting question remains about the possible meaning of this expression. This matter should be commented on accordingly. It is known that much earlier than the period discussed here early medieval chroniclers happened to transfer the name of the old Germanic tribe, invaders of Rome and founders of the state in Africa, to different groups of the Slavs.<sup>323</sup> The origin of this phenomenon is not clear.<sup>324</sup> There is a certain similarity between the pronunciation of the old-German word ‘Wenden’ = Slavs and ‘Vandalen’ = Vandals—and the inclinations of medieval authors are known to connect similar names.<sup>325</sup> This transfer, however, served another purpose. The Germanic Vandals were, after all, the enemies of Rome—the civilized world, so ascribing their name to the Slavs certainly expressed in the Middle Ages a sort of aversion, but also some fear of an alien or even savage nature which was attributed to the Germanic peoples in antiquity.

It seems that the term applied to Mieszko I was associated with certain reservations of the Augsburg author about the duke and his people. We know that if medieval writers possessed some detailed knowledge about the objects of their observations, they used more precise expressions. The form applied here suggests that the Piast ruler was an alien for the writer, a fabulous (*quidam*) duke of (some) ‘Vandals’, whose exoticism graced the collection of miracles in the making. On the other hand, however, even such an attitude towards the Polish monarch testifies to the fact that Mieszko I entered a certain cultural circulation, becoming in a sense ‘one of us’. Even though—as quite a few examples show—a pagan could become the object

<sup>323</sup> Sowa, Reisinger, *Das Ethnicon ‘Sclavi’*, p. 106 passim, (index).

<sup>324</sup> *Conversio Bagoariorum et Carantanorum*, p. 102, note no. 27; Roland Steinacher, “Wenden, Slawen, Vandalen. Eine frühmittelalterliche pseudologische Gleichsetzung und ihre Nachwirkungen”, in: *Die Suche nach den Ursprüngen. Von der Bedeutung des frühen Mittelalters*, ed. Walter Pohl (Wien, 2004), pp. 329–353.

<sup>325</sup> The practice of more permanent identifying the Poles in sources with the Vandals did not begin until the 12th century—Grabski, *Polska w opiniach*, pp. 10, 136.

of actions taken by a saint, and in all these cases the intervention of the *sacrum* elevated him: he converted to Christianity and transformed himself from an alien to 'one of us' and, what is more, being a witness of sanctity, an important one.

### 1.3.2 Misicho comes et Sclavus<sup>326</sup>

There are a few accounts which refer to the last stage in Mieszko I's life. They document the process of a kind of 'taming' the ruler, and even more, they show that in fact the duke got included in the circle of the culture of the German elites at the turn of the 980s and the 990s.

In the *Obituary Annals of Fulda*<sup>327</sup> (*Annales necrologici Fuldenses*) two notices concerning Mieszko I can be found. In one of the extant versions the Piast duke was named 'comes et Sclavus',<sup>328</sup> whereas in the other—'marchio'.<sup>329</sup>

The use of both terms, especially the title 'marchio', in relation to somebody outside the circle of the Carolingian culture is so exceptional<sup>330</sup> that some contemporary German scholars are convinced that in fact Mieszko I was commissioned by the emperor to represent him as a governor of a certain territory within his state. And the Northern March is suggested as the area under Mieszko's administration, where after margrave Ditrich's death (985), but before Liuthar of Walbeck appeared as the administrator, no governor is mentioned by sources. This mysterious vacancy gives rise to speculations that it was Mieszko—being the husband of Oda, at that time the senior representative of the family of the counts of Haldensleben—who was a sort of head of this aristocratic group and simultaneous governor of the

<sup>326</sup> *Obituary Annals of Fulda*—the version in *Codex Fuldensis 1 (B 1)*—Hessische Landesbibliothek, MS. B 1 (Fuldauer Totenannalen)—according to: *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda im früheren Mittelalter*, ed. Karl Schmidt, vol. 1: *Grundlegung und Edition der fuldischen Gedenküberlieferung*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften 8/1 (München, 1978), p. 451.

<sup>327</sup> There is known 5 version of *Obituary Annals of Fulda* (Lat.: *Annales necrologici Fuldenses*, Germ.: *Totenannalen*): *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda*, p. 271 (note about Mieszko I).

<sup>328</sup> In older studies the following interpretation of this entry was suggested: *Miseco com[es] Sc[avorum]*.—*Annales necrologici Fuldenses*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS 13 (Hannoverae 1881), p. 206; see also: Jasiński, *Rodowód pierwszych Piastów*, pp. 58, 67, note no. 49. However, recently this version is commonly regarded as correct: *Miceco com[es] et Sc[avus]*—see: *RGSEO*, 3, p. 89, no. 269; and: *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda*, p. 271, (Abb. 39); see also: *Regesta imperii*, 2: *sächsisches Haus*, Abt. 3: *Die Regesten des Kaiserreiches unter Otto III (980/983–1002)*, ed. Mathilde Uhlirz (Graz-Köln, 1956), p. 703.

<sup>329</sup> *Codex Vaticanus*—Roma, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Ottobon. lat. 2531, Cod. Vat (Fuldaer Totenannalen); za: *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda*, p. 451.

<sup>330</sup> The title 'comes' to address the Slavs rarely appears in sources—Sowa, Reisinger, *Das Ethnicon 'Sclavi'*, p. 130, p. 161, p. 172.



march which had been permanently linked to the lords of Haldensleben for some time.<sup>331</sup> This issue has not been analyzed more thoroughly yet, and the hypothesis about Mieszko's post as a margrave appears briefly on the margin of other discussions.

The opinions expressed by Polish scholars, even if they approach the subject of our interest—which rarely happens—are timid and, according to them, the term 'marchio', applied to Mieszko I, would only emphasize respect shown to the Polish ruler and the appreciation of his significance for the empire. At the same time historians do not consider the possibility of his being a dignitary of the empire of the Liudolfings.<sup>332</sup> Such a stance is well grounded in the material. After all, we do not notice that in the early Middle Ages Slavic aristocrats belonged to the group of the lords of the empire, and in the central Middle Ages such cases were only few and far between. And even when it happened, they were only people of Slavic origin, usually Germanized.<sup>333</sup>

The problem of ethnic prejudices in the Middle Ages is quite complex, especially as regards mutual contacts between the Slavs and Germans, as in fact we observe the borderland not only of ethnic but also of civilizational nature.<sup>334</sup> The past has witnessed too easy and too general conclusions on this issue,<sup>335</sup> which were not based, in many cases, on the authentic accounts.

<sup>331</sup> RGSEO, 3, p. 89ff. (no. 269); Körntgen, "Königtum, Adel und", p. 91.

<sup>332</sup> Borawska, "Mieszko i Oda", p. 12, p. 38; see also: Karol Maleczyński, "W sprawie zjazdu gnieźnieńskiego z roku 1000", *Sobótka. Śląski Kwartalnik Historyczny* 21 (1966), pp. 507–540, p. 510; Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder*, pp. 46, 189; Oskar Kossman, "Deutschland und Polen um das Jahr 1000", *ZfO* 21 (1972), 401–466, p. 411f.; see also: Wiszewski, 'Domus Bolezlai', p. 478ff.

<sup>333</sup> This matter is complicated—e.g. the case of Premisl Ottokar II, who before 1278 allegedly issued his famous manifesto which highlighted the idea of solidarity among the Slavs: see e.g.: Antoni Barciak, "Polacy w bitwie pod Suchymi Krutami", *Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Śląskiego—Prace Historyczne* 4 (1975), 7–23, p. 21f.; Jerzy Strzelczyk, "Legenda o słowiańskim pochodzeniu rodu Wiprecht z Grójca", in *Słowianie w dziejach Europy*, ed. Jerzy Ochmański (Poznań, 1974), pp. 63–74; Lübke, "Zwischen Polen und dem Reich", p. 101.

<sup>334</sup> Reid Hoffmann, "Outsiders by Birth and Blood: Racist Ideologies on peripheries of medieval Europe", *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 6 (1983), 1–34 (the author does not discern the problem of the Slavs at all).

<sup>335</sup> More about the issue: Christian Lübke, "Slaven und Deutsche um das Jahr 1000", *Medievalia Historica Bohemica* 3 (1993), 59–90; Herman Krabbo, "Eine Schilderung der Elbslawen aus dem Jahre 1108", in *Papstum und Kaisertum. Forschungen zur politischen Geschichte und Geisteskultur des Mittelalters. Paul Kehr zum 65. Geburtstag dargebracht* (Aalen, 1973), pp. 250–262; Gerd Althoff, *Die Deutschen und ihr Mittelalter. Thesen und Funktionen moderner Geschichtsbilder vom Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 1992), pp. 147–164; Paul Knoll, "Economic and Political Institutions on the Polish-German Frontier in the Middle Ages: Action, Reaction, Interaction", in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, ed. Robert Bartlett, Angus MacKay (Oxford, 1989), pp. 151–174.

Instead, scholars transferred in retrospect the atmosphere and character of future relations to the early Middle Ages.

Nevertheless, if we want to analyze this matter a bit more carefully, we will notice that there are some reports on the attempts made by the Piasts—only partially successful as they did not last—to hold the office of a territorial lord, granted by the German monarchs and within their territory. One of such indisputable cases dates back to 1002. Then Boleslav Chrobry made a formal demand at the convention at Merseburg to become the governor of the March of Meissen,<sup>336</sup> which in fact had been earlier promised to him—as it is known from the account by Thietmar—by Henry II, which had been recognized by some of the local Saxon lords.<sup>337</sup> Although the German king did not let him assume this office in Meissen, but instead gave him the much less important Upper and Lower Lusatia, Chrobry became in any case a vassal of the German king after taking over these territories.<sup>338</sup>

The situation described here shows that the status of a territorial lord of the empire could have been achievable for the Piast duke. The whole situation was repeated during the convention at Merseburg in 1013, where Boleslav Chrobry paid homage to the German king and again received Upper and Lower Lusatia in return. At that time also the son of the Polish duke, Mieszko II, became a vassal of the king and—although the territory of this fiefdom is not known—the young Piast was perceived by Thietmar as a ‘knight’ of the German ruler.<sup>339</sup>

Except for the complications and ambiguities of the aforementioned examples, they provide us enough evidence to confirm that the issue most important here—the administration of the Northern March by Mieszko I on behalf of Theophanu<sup>340</sup>—would have been likely to happen, especially when the Polish ruler could administer part of the March of Meissen.

In order to take another look at this problem, we should now analyze the value, character, and context of the content of the *Obituary Annals of Fulda*. It is noteworthy that both those who refuse to acknowledge Mieszko I as a possible margrave and those who would keenly argue that he held this office did not try to further investigate, for example, the problem of the dating of the entry. What is more, nobody has examined the meaning of the title that

<sup>336</sup> More about this: chapter 2.3. of this book.

<sup>337</sup> Thietmar, p. 263ff. (5,10); *The ‘Chronicon’*, p. 212.

<sup>338</sup> Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte*, p. 612.

<sup>339</sup> More about this chapter 3.1. of this book.

<sup>340</sup> Engels, “Theophanu—die westliche Kaiserin”, p. 28f.; Fried, “Die Frauen und die politische”, pp. 29–48.

would have been ascribed to Mieszko in the context of the nomenclature used with reference to the offices held in Germany of the day.

Analyzing the reports included in the sources of Fulda is indispensable for any research done on the status of the Polish ruler and his contacts with the empire. The records were made by the monks representing a dignified cult centre which was close to the court, they are authentic and, although not contemporary to the rule of Mieszko I, not much later—which is quite rare among the sources of the day which were associated with Polish issues.

The entries cannot be, however, interpreted without considering their origin and the character of the books where they belong. Therefore, this is the matter to be discussed at this stage, at least for a while.

The Obituary Annals of Fulda were written gradually from 779 onwards, so they date back to the foundation of the monastery, and they were continued in their older form until the second half of the 11th century. They were used by the congregation of monks for special prayers for their benefactors. As time passed, given the fact that the entries of those latter became numerous, they were not distinguished as individuals in services, but considered as groups. Their names were written in an obituary according to the day of their death so as to, when an anniversary of their death came, read out the entries publicly during a service, and later—when they became too numerous to be distinguished individually—the obituary books were placed on altars and the souls of those recorded in them were commended to Heaven's care.<sup>341</sup>

All these devotional practices were held in high regard by the monks. Among the reasons was that fact that secular benefactors, in return for the promise of prayers till the end of the world, presented the monastery with gifts, sometimes very precious. Of some significance was also the fact that some satisfaction and prestige were drawn by the monks from the religious bonds with laymen. The most important, however, for this particular aspect of the activity of the monastery was the fact that its social role was perceived as an institution which served as intermediary between the mortal and supernatural lives, between the living and the dead.<sup>342</sup> Therefore, in this context the obituaries turned out to be almost liturgical books, like the medium

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<sup>341</sup> Otto G. Oexle, "Memoria und Memorialüberlieferung im frühen Mittelalter", *FMS* 10 (1976), 70–95.

<sup>342</sup> Joachim Wollasch, "Die mittelalterliche Lebensform der Verbrüderung", in *Memoria. Der geschichtliche Zeugniswert des liturgischen Gedenkens im Mittelalter*, ed. Karl Schmidt, Joachim Wollasch (München, 1984), pp. 213–232; Otto G. Oexle, "Die Gegenwart der Toten", in *Death in the Middle Ages*, eds. Herman Braet, Werner Vorbeke (Leuven, 1983), pp. 19–77; Arnold Angenendt, "Theologie und Liturgie der mittelalterlichen Toten-Memoria", in *Memoria. Der geschichtliche*, pp. 79–199.

which linked the living with the supernatural.<sup>343</sup> All this has to be taken into consideration when their content is examined.

The volumes including records of the dead were in constant use and as a consequence were gradually damaged. But, as we know, they were important and needed, therefore the monks re-wrote them, filling old illegible spaces with some new entries. Sometimes, the already existing codex was supplemented with some new pages, and it even happened that the surviving parts of a few old books were stitched together to form a new one. The abbey in Fulda was highly valued among the elites, especially during the Carolingian and Ottonian times, thus it received generous grants. The wealth of the monastery facilitated foundations of its branches. In the 10th century the number of the monks associated with Fulda exceeded 600, while the whole congregation consisted of a number of side foundations—secular parishes which were subordinated to the abbey.<sup>344</sup> They all considered the legacy of the obituaries produced by their mother-monastery as their own, which is why they tended to copy, bind, and house them in their respective places. Because of the work done by numerous scribes several versions of the originally uniform obituary were written.

In the second half of the 11th century the prayer tradition which resulted in creating the books under discussion became anachronistic in the context of transformations within the Church, yet efforts were made to preserve the older codices for future generations also. In the aftermath of different misfortunes which affected the abbey, the volumes either got damaged or scattered. Nowadays five different versions of the *Obituary Annals of Fulda* are known to be extant.<sup>345</sup> We shall focus on two of them, each containing the aforementioned variants of the entry on Mieszko I. The version where the Polish duke is addressed as ‘comes’ belongs to the work known as ‘Codex Fuldensis 1 (B1).<sup>346</sup> This book, stitched and bound probably at the close of the 11th century from a few different fragments of older manuscripts contains some obituaries, including the one which refers to Mieszko (fol. 20v), only in its oldest part (folios 1–21). The entries of a later date are no longer prayers for

<sup>343</sup> Otto G. Oexle, “Die Überlieferung der fuldischen Totenannalen”, in *Die Klostergemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 2.2, pp. 447–504.

<sup>344</sup> Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 2004), p. 204.

<sup>345</sup> Otto G. Oexle, “Memorialüberlieferung und Gebetsgedächtnis in Fulda vom 8. bis zum 11. Jahrhundert”, in *Die Klostergemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 1, p. 167.

<sup>346</sup> Hessische Landesbibliothek, Ms. B1 (Fuldaer Totenannalen)—*Die Klostergemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 2.2., p. 451.

the benefactors of the congregation.<sup>347</sup> Thus let us take a closer look at the opening paragraphs of the book.

The obituaries were placed on the first pages of the codex when abbot Haicho (917–923) was in office. They date back in time almost to the beginning of the monastery in the year 779 and are continued till 920. The manuscript also includes a copy of a prayer fraternity agreement of 863, the list of the convent of 919, a short *gesta abbatum*, and the annotations of the obituary which ends at the beginning of 910 (folios 2–16). Next, there is a gap made by four missing pages—which is suggested by the old pagination—followed by the list of the members of the convent, written after 935, from one hundred years before. The end section of the oldest part of the codex (fol. 18r and 20r to 21r)—as Otto Gerhard Oexle, the renowned German medieval historian and expert in the subject argues—began to be completed with obituaries around the turn of 975 and 976, or at the beginning of 976, during the time of abbot Werner (968–982).<sup>348</sup> The last notes were made to the end of abbot Hatto III’s tenure in office, who died in April of 997.<sup>349</sup> The above-mentioned historian has identified a couple of characteristic traits of the handwriting in the part of the manuscript under consideration, which let him date the entries.<sup>350</sup>

The annotation regarding Mieszko I, (folio 20v),<sup>351</sup> would be the work, according to Oexle, of the third consecutive scribe, who was professionally active during the final stage of the life of the above mentioned abbot Hatto III (991–997).<sup>352</sup> This is suggested by the fact that the glosses which concerned the death of this abbot, placed evidently after 997 on the top, bottom, and left margins of the page, were written in handwriting that differs from the original scribe’s.<sup>353</sup>

The page under discussion contains the obituaries which begin with the year 986 and end with 992. On this page, except for the annotation concerning the Polish ruler, the entries can be found which refer, among others, to: empress

<sup>347</sup> Otto G. Oexle, “Totenannalen”, in *Die Klostergemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 2.2, pp. 447–504, p. 472.

<sup>348</sup> Oexle, “Totenannalen”, pp. 467–474.

<sup>349</sup> Oexle, “Memorialüberlieferung und Gebetsgedächtnis”, p. 169.

<sup>350</sup> Oexle, “Totenannalen”, p. 473.

<sup>351</sup> *Die Klostergemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 1, p. 427, Abb. 39—*Misicho com. et. Scl.* and: *Die Klostergemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 2.1, p. 402: *Misicho com et Scl.* (Cod.Fuld.1, fol.20v—cod.fulda B1).

<sup>352</sup> Oexle, “Totenannalen”, p. 471.

<sup>353</sup> Oexle, “Totenannalen”, p. 471.

Theophanu, d. 991 (*Thiophama imper*); duke Henry (d.989) (*Heinricus dux*);<sup>354</sup> Frederick (*Fridrich archiep*), the archbishop of Salzburg (958–991);<sup>355</sup> a number of bishops: Balzo of Speyer, d. 987;<sup>356</sup> Hugh of Würzburg (983–990);<sup>357</sup> Folkmar of Utrecht (976–990);<sup>358</sup> Reginold of Eichstätt (966–991);<sup>359</sup> Pilgrim of Passau (971–991);<sup>360</sup> Adalbero II of Verdun (984–990);<sup>361</sup> Erkenbald of Strassburg (965–991);<sup>362</sup> Gerdag of Hildesheim (990–992).<sup>363</sup> The entry of the year 992 was devoted to the death of *comes* Heribert (*Heribraht com*), the count who came from the Rhineland aristocratic and renowned dynasty of the Conradines, the father of Otto of Hammerstein.<sup>364</sup>

The review of these names makes us realize that, as a matter of fact, on this page of the obituary were recorded almost all the members of the German ecclesiastical and the majority of the secular political elites who died between 987 and 992.<sup>365</sup> Each of them was provided with the proper title, chosen—as it seems—most carefully by the monk redacting the book. It is worth mentioning here that the obituaries of Fulda also house the names of the monarchs of France, Burgundy, almost all the bishops of the empire, and

<sup>354</sup> Probably Henry III, Bavarian duke (983–985) and Carinthian (976–978, 983–989) Luitpolding—*Eropäische Stammtafeln*, taf. 83.

<sup>355</sup> Archbishop of Salzburg (958–991)—*Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 2.1, p. 333; Herbert Zielinski, *Der Reichsepiskopat in spätottonischer und salischer Zeit (1002–1125)*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1984), p. 117.

<sup>356</sup> *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 2.1, p. 330—bishop of Speyer (970–987); Albert Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, vol. 3 (Berlin, 1954), p. 989 (Balderich, d. 986).

<sup>357</sup> He belonged to the group of the chaplains of Otto II and friends of Gerbert of Aurillac—Josef Fleckenstein, *Die Hofkapelle der deutschen Könige*, vol. 2: *Die Hofkapelle im Rahmen der ottonisch-salischen Reichskirche*, Schriften der MGH 16, 2 (Stuttgart, 1966), p. 73; *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda*, 2.1, p. 337; Zielinski, *Der Reichsepiskopat in*, p. 45.

<sup>358</sup> Poppo, bishop of Utrecht—Fleckenstein, *Die Hofkapelle der deutschen*, p. 68f.; *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 2.1, p. 333; Zielinski, *Der Reichsepiskopat in*, pp. 38, 121.

<sup>359</sup> *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 2.1., p. 339.

<sup>360</sup> *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 2.1., p. 331; Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, vol. 3, p. 621ff., p. 1003.

<sup>361</sup> *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 2.1., p. 329.

<sup>362</sup> Erchenbald (965–991) *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 2.1., p. 333, bishop of Strasbourg.

<sup>363</sup> *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 2.1, p. 334.

<sup>364</sup> *Die Klostersgemeinschaft von Fulda*, vol. 2.1., p. 390. More about this person: chapter 2.3.3. of this book.

<sup>365</sup> Does not appear in the source: Osdag, bishop of Hildesheim (985–989); Adaldag; archbishop of Hamburg-Brema (937–988)—he appears in another version of the obituary; also there is no Etich, bishop of Augsburg (982–988); and Frederick I, bishop of Zeitz (979–990?); and also Volcold, bishop of Meißen (969–992). The episcopate of the Reich of the day is discussed in: Hauck, *Kirchengeschichte Deutschlands*, pp. 981–1040 (lists of archbishops and bishops); see also: Albrecht Graf Finck von Finckenstein, *Bischof und Reich. Untersuchungen zum Integrationsprozeß des ottonisch-frühsalischen Reiches (919–1056)*, Studien zur Mediävistik 1 (Sigmaringen 1989), esp., p. 193ff.

the elite of the German aristocratic families grouped around the Liudolfings.<sup>366</sup> The abbey turned out to be devotionally attractive, on a par with its long history, and the popularity was widespread across the territory of the former Carolingian state.

Thus in a sense, the presence of Mieszko I, who was a newly-baptized Christian and a man from the periphery in the world of emergent western Christian culture, in this circle was a kind of elevation. The record also documents the Piast ruler's entering the world of the elites who considered themselves as the successors of the Carolingian tradition.

The entry concerning the Polish duke was made in the spring of 997 at the latest.<sup>367</sup> This was probably done, as the practice we know suggests, by copying the information from the older diptych, or the fraternity book of the Fulda congregation of prayer. It is also likely that the monks made the entry on Mieszko I's death directly in the volume under redaction, as soon as the news reached them—different practices are known with this respect. The circumstances of taking the note are not clear and they have to remain unknown. Besides, irrespective of the question whether the title of power was chosen for Mieszko during his life, or after his death, the most important fact is that this choice confirms the conviction, which was prevailing among the German elites in the 990s, as regards the political status of Mieszko and his place in the ruling hierarchy of the region.

Before we consider the meaning of the title 'comes', used to address the Piast ruler, we shall analyze the other version of the obituary, where Mieszko was named differently. Only after comparing these two entries can we contemplate their sense, separately and together, and then we shall try to identify the context in which they were applied.

### 1.3.3 Misicho marchio

The book which contains the entry where the Polish ruler is addressed as margrave (*marchio*) is known as the 'Codex Vaticanus'.<sup>368</sup> According to Otto Gerhard Oexle, it was written just before 1023, during the tenure of abbot Richart (1018–1039). The origins of the book are associated with establishing a new foundation of the abbey of Fulda, namely the parish of St. Andrew

<sup>366</sup> Jakobi, "Die geistlichen und weltlichen", p. 850.

<sup>367</sup> Oexle, "Die Überlieferung der fuldischen", p. 467ff.

<sup>368</sup> *Die Klostergemeinschaft von Fulda*, p. 451 Cod. Vat.—Roma, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Cod. Ottobon. lat. 2531 (*Fuldaer Totenannalen*).

in Neuenberg, for which the codex was designated.<sup>369</sup> The obituaries were placed in this book in two series. The first contains the names of those who died between 779 and 980; the other, where the note on Mieszko I under discussion was written, has the entries from 971–1065.<sup>370</sup> The fact that these two lists overlap argues for the conclusion that the manuscript was based on two sources, one of which, later, must have included a kind of annotation regarding the Polish duke, which was then copied by the scribe who was working on the new obituary annals, presented to the parish in Neuenberg and continued there.

It is not possible, by any means, to check when exactly the first source version of the record *Miseco marchio* was made, and what is its relation to the note which elevates the Polish duke with the title ‘comes’. However, what is interesting here—in the context of the assumptions that the duke held the office of the governor of the Northern March in the final years of his life—is the fact that evidently the oldest extant obituary referring to Mieszko I, written soon after his death, does not address him as the margrave, but only as the ‘comes’. If, in fact, the Piast ruler had held the office of the lord of the Northern March until his death, the *Codex Fuldensis* B1 should have reported this. Indeed, this matter is not clear, as there were the cases when the titles *comes* and *marchio*—which will be further discussed below—appeared interchangeably, and it even happened that this latter expression was not associated with the function of a margrave. On the other hand, an extraordinary fact of the march being held by a Slav should have been remembered by the author of the entry from before 997 as a discriminant of Mieszko I’s status. The lack of such information in the older obituary diminishes the value of the younger record and makes us doubt in it as the basis for far reaching conclusions regarding Mieszko’s margraveship.

Nevertheless, there is no doubt that even if the title *marchio* was ascribed by the author of the obituary to Mieszko I as late as around the year 1023, this note is of some value anyway. After all, it has to harmonize with contemporary, from the declining years of Henry II, opinions expressed by the circles associated with Fulda on Mieszko I’s status, or even the Piasts in general, in the political structure of the region.

During this quarter of a century which separated the time of registering the note from the *Codex Vaticanus* from editing the entry of the *Codex*

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<sup>369</sup> Oexle, “Memorialüberlieferung und Gebetsgedächtnis”, 136–177, p. 170; Mechthild Sandmann, “Die Folge der Äbte”, in *Die Klostergemeinschaft von Fulda*, pp. 178–204, p. 195.

<sup>370</sup> *Die Klostergemeinschaft von Fulda*, p. 271.



*Fuldensis*, much changed in mutual relations between the Piast ruler and the German monarch. In the year 997 the Piast duke was the empire's ally, whereas in 1023, after almost two decades of wars, his status was different from the previous one, even though it is not entirely clear how the problem of Boleslav Chrobry's attitude towards Henry II should really be seen.<sup>371</sup>

The abbey of Fulda, the most important royal monastery in Germany, should reflect in its obituary legacy, which came into existence after long-standing wars of Henry II with Boleslav Chrobry, a certain obvious mistrust in the views of German courtly circles towards the Piasts. In this situation, the term 'marchio', applied as a title of power for Mieszko I, which in fact conceals a certain familiarity and willingness for a kind of cultural acceptance, as we read it, is puzzling.

It is noteworthy in this whole matter that both titles, deriving from the times of the Frankish empire, were at that time used exclusively to address senior officials of the royal territorial administration, and only occurred on the territory penetrated by the Carolingian civilization.<sup>372</sup> It was not until the turn of the 10th and the 11th centuries when the terms *marchio* and *comes* began to acquire new meanings, which went together with some organizational changes of the state of the Liudolfings, and next the Salians, which included a more precise hierarchization and unification of bureaucratic terminology.<sup>373</sup>

In some studies, especially in more general works and syntheses, attempts are made to organize the titles of power which were in use in the 10th century Germany. This practice usually leads to the formation of a pyramid-like structure, on top of which is the monarch bearing the title of king (*rex*), or emperor (*imperator, caesar*),<sup>374</sup> further below are dukes (*duces, principes*), next margraves (*marchiones*) are placed, below are counts (*comites*), and

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<sup>371</sup> After the death of chronicler Thietmar in 1018 there are no more sources that would provide so many details about Poland and the situation in Central Europe in general.

<sup>372</sup> Karl F. Werner, "Missus-marchio-comes. Entre l'administration centrale et 'administration locale de l'empire carolingien", in *Historie comparée de l'administration (IV<sup>e</sup>-XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles)*, ed. Werner Paravicini, Karl F. Werner, Beiheft der Francia 9 (München, 1980), pp. 191-239; Karl Brunner, "Der fränkische Fürstentitel im neunten und zehnten Jahrhundert", in *Intitulatio II: Lateinische*, pp. 179-340.

<sup>373</sup> Leyser, "The Ottonian government", pp. 721-753; Stefan Weinfurter, "Die Zentralisierung der Herrschaftsgewalt im Reich durch Kaiser Heinrich II", *Historisches Jahrbuch* 106 (1986), 241-297, p. 277ff.

<sup>374</sup> Herwig Wolfram, "Lateinische Herrschertitel im neunten und zehnten Jahrhundert", in *Intitulatio II: Lateinische*, pp. 19-178; Karpf, *Herrscherlegitimation und Reichsbegriff*, p. 70ff.

lower are other, lower ranks of society.<sup>375</sup> However, if we compare this neat construction with the picture of social relations in the Ottonian Empire, it turns out that the question of gradation of official ranks is not that easy to put in such clear, well-shaped schemes.<sup>376</sup> The bureaucratic nomenclature used before the 11th century fluctuated, and also the tasks within the competence of the officials were not precisely determined. This circumstance does not let us understand the meaning of the titles used in Fulda to name Mieszko I.

The character of the majority of offices in relation to the royal territorial administration in Germany remained similar to the Carolingian patterns until the central Middle Ages. Therefore, it is impossible to discuss the Ottonian bureaucratic nomenclature without referring to the previous epoch and reviewing, even briefly, the Frankish achievements in this matter. Let us stress at the beginning that—against a popular view—the Carolingian monarch did not go round his state in order to personally supervise administrative issues, but in most cases he either stayed on a relatively small territory which formed the nucleus of his territorial power, or journeyed only to the most important, as a matter of fact almost the same areas of his kingdom—to the places where his palaces (*palatia*) were sited.<sup>377</sup> The king left his ‘bastion’ only on special occasions. Similar was the practice of his successors in the east Frankish Kingdom, and subsequently in the early medieval Germany.<sup>378</sup> Most of the territory which belonged to the state never saw its suzerain. In return, authority was executed by numerous dignitaries, who remained under control, sometimes more, sometimes less, of the central power. They gave accounts of their activities to the king during court conventions.

It was already during the reign of Charles the Great that the emperor created in the peripheral regions of his state what were known as *regna*—administrative and military centres.<sup>379</sup> Their network had covered the whole

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<sup>375</sup> Such a system was applied e.g. in the commentaries to the obituaries of Fulda—Jakobi, “Die geistlichen und weltlichen”, pp. 792–887; or in other studies, see e.g.: Althoff, *Adels- und Königfamilien im*; Schulze, *Grundstrukturen der Verfassung* (vol. 3: *Kaiser und Reich*).

<sup>376</sup> The title ‘comes’ indicated a royal officer of high rank. On the one hand it was associated with a county (*comitatus*), but, on the other hand, the following terms appeared in sources: *comes et marchio*, *dux et comes*, *comes et missus*. There is an opinion that there were a few types of the title of count, e.g. a ‘great’ count administered a number of counties and was senior to ‘small’ counts, who were his vassals—Werner, “Missus-marchio-comes”, p. 221f.; Brunner, “Der fränkische Fürstentitel”, p. 192ff.

<sup>377</sup> Werner, “Missus-marchio-comes”, p. 193ff.

<sup>378</sup> Thomas Zotz, “Königspfalz und Herrschaftspraxis im 10. und frühen 11 Jahrhundert”, *Blätter für die deutsche Landesgeschichte* 120 (1984), pp. 19–46.

<sup>379</sup> Werner, “Missus-marchio-comes”, p. 208; see also: Edmund E. Stengel, *Abhandlungen und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Kaisergedankens im Mittelalter* (Köln-Graz, 1965), pp. 171–205; Karl F. Werner, “Völker und Regna”, in *Beiträge zur mittelalterlichen Reichs- und*

empire by the end of the 9th century. In total around 20 such districts were established. They became the bases for future duchies in France and Germany.<sup>380</sup> Each *regnum* was governed by a count (*comes, comes palatinus*). He supervised some low-ranking officials, also known as counts (we can name them 'lesser' counts). These *comites* governed the areas called counties (*pagus, comitatus*).<sup>381</sup>

Some selected lands, vulnerable to invasions and important for strategic reasons, were subordinated to a special official, who was associated with the emperor more than with the governors of respective *regnum*, whose parts they were to be in theory.<sup>382</sup> These territories are usually known in historiography as 'marches'. One has to remember, however, that the name itself is not Frankish and comes from a later period. During the reign of Charles the Great neither the term *marchia* nor the title *marchio* existed. The territory selected from the *regnum* was presided over by the dignitary known as the 'governor of the border' (*prefectus limitis*), this expression referring to Roman military commanders, who had similar authority.<sup>383</sup> The term *marchio* was used during the reign of Charles the Great to name counts (those lesser ones), who governed marches and were subordinate to this *prefecti limitis*. This is why *marchiones* appear in contemporary documents in groups.

In the 11th century, initially in Italy and later in other regions of the empire, the administrator of those *marchionum* began to be called duke (*dux, dux limitis*).<sup>384</sup> During the reign of Louis the Pious the title *dux* already meant the governor of those *regni* and competed with the term *prefectus* which had been used by the administration of Charles the Great instead of the expression *dux*, as the latter was associated with too much independence.<sup>385</sup> In the mid 11th century the term *marchio* began to be used to mean the head of lesser counts (*comites*), no matter if he governed inside the country, in the

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*Nationsbildung in Deutschland und Frankreich*, Beiheft der HZ 24, (München, 1997), pp. 15–43; Beumann, "Das Imperium und die", pp. 11–36.

<sup>380</sup> Werner, "Missus-marchio-comes", p. 209f.

<sup>381</sup> Schulze, *Grundstrukturen der Verfassung*, vol. 3, p. 90ff.

<sup>382</sup> Werner, "Missus-marchio-comes", p. 213.

<sup>383</sup> Werner, "Missus-marchio-comes", p. 214.

<sup>384</sup> Werner, "Missus-marchio-comes", p. 215.

<sup>385</sup> Werner, "Missus-marchio-comes", pp. 212, 216; see also: *Hincmarus De ordine palatii*, ed. Viktor Krause, *Fontes iuris Germanici antiqui* (Berolini 1894), pp. 7–25, p. 21, (c. 30); and: Rosamond McKitterick, *Charles the Great. The Formation of a European Identity*, Cambridge 2008, p. 148.

province (*regnum*), or in the borderland. The term *marchio* appeared interchangeably with the titles *dux* and *comes*.<sup>386</sup>

The above-outlined nomenclature was adopted by succession monarchies of the Carolingian empire, which were founded in the course of the 10th century. Besides, the whole structure of the territorial division, which was characteristic for the system of the late Frankish state, remained in its core nature in 10th and 11th century Germany and France, and the officials who governed the *regnum* were addressed as *duces regni*, or synonymously *marchones regni*.<sup>387</sup> It can be noticed, however, that in royal documents, where numbers of officials are listed, the term *dux* almost always (there are exceptions) appears before the expression *comes*, which can suggest a higher rank of this former title.<sup>388</sup> It was also probable that the term *dux* was rarely used to name ordinary aristocrats. Usually, it was reserved for the members of the royal family, including the king himself.<sup>389</sup> This was also the way of addressing foreign monarchs.<sup>390</sup> It is significant that in the case of using the title *dux* with the name of his people (e.g. *dux Alamanorum*) there was a tendency to emphasize the tribal source of the rights which the characterized ruler possessed, as opposed to the title lacking additional attributes, which derived its legitimacy from the king's authority.<sup>391</sup>

It is clear, however, that the upper strata of secular elites, which consisted of the people belonging to the ruling dynasty and senior aristocracy,—as a rule these two groups were related—were distinguished with ducal titles (*duces*), or the titles of margraves (*marchiones*), as well as counts (*comites*) with a complement which separated this title from the dignities of lesser aristocracy, who assumed offices of lesser counts (*comites*), or ordinary nobles.<sup>392</sup>

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<sup>386</sup> Werner, "Missus-marchio-comes", pp. 216, 219. E.g. about Rudolf of Burgundy (885): *Roudulfus comes nec non etiam inclitus marchius*—Werner, "Missus-marchio-comes", p. 218, p. 98; see also: Kienast, "Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich", p. 43; Brunner, "Der fränkische Fürstentitel", p. 204.

<sup>387</sup> Werner, "Missus-marchio-comes", p. 218; Brunner, "Der fränkische Fürstentitel", p. 207ff.

<sup>388</sup> Perhaps the title *dux* in the context of a replacement for the emperor?—Kienast, "Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich", (the author seems to think that the title *dux* was of higher rank than *comes*), p. 328 *passim*.

<sup>389</sup> Kienast, "Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich", p. 46, p. 223.

<sup>390</sup> In the 11th century France military commanders *gentes* were called interchangeably *rex* and *dux*; e.g. this was the title of the dukes of Brittany—Kienast, "Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich", p. 40.

<sup>391</sup> Kienast, "Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich", p. 613.

<sup>392</sup> During the reigns of Henry I and Otto I the titles *comes* and *dux* were in use to name the same persons—Kienast, "Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich", p. 314.

Let us analyze a few examples. The famous margrave, Gero I (d. 965), lord of the then uniform Eastern March, which comprised all the territories of the subjugated Lusatian tribes, and partially also of the Veleti,<sup>393</sup> who was in his time the most powerful German aristocrat after the king, was sometimes addressed as *marchio*, but it also happened that he was mentioned in written sources where no attempt was made to undermine his rank as count (*comes*). We can also find in sources another title, that of *dux* (*duke, voivode*), for the margrave.<sup>394</sup> This latter expression best reflects the real significance of this eminent person. The extant accounts do not offer a key which would let us determine the context and more precise meaning of these respective titles. It is likely that until the mid 10th century, or later, they were considered as synonyms. It is also likely that the shades in meanings of these titles showed only subtle differences.

The same phenomenon can be observed in the practice of addressing Swabian dukes: Herman I (926–949) used to be addressed as *dux Alamanorum* (*Svevorum*), but also *comes in Alemania*,<sup>395</sup> Burchard II (954–973) sometimes appears as *dux*, but we can also find his title of *dux Alamannorum*, as well as the term, found in a royal document, *comes*—the same title is visible on the coins from his mint.<sup>396</sup> Nevertheless, future dukes of Swabia (at the turn of the 10th century) were as a rule addressed as *dux* (the title *comes* disappears completely), while the ‘bare’ title of *dux* appeared when the author of the text stressed a certain reservation towards the aristocrat, and its fuller form—e.g. *dux Alamanorum*—emphasized a warm and respectful attitude towards the described person.<sup>397</sup>

It is interesting that in the case of nomenclature referring to the leader of Bavaria the expression *dux* was used already from the beginning of the 10th century. This was the title applied to duke Bertold (938–947), brother of Arnulf of Bavaria,<sup>398</sup> and later the Liudolfings on the Bavarian throne. As a rule, Otto I addressed his brother Henry I (947–955) as *dilectus frater noster*, or in a similar way; the word *dux* appeared in his case exceptionally.

<sup>393</sup> Reinhard Wenskus, *Sächsischer Stammesadel und fränkischer Reichsadel*, Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, phil.-hist. Kl. 3. Folge No. 93 (Göttingen, 1976), p. 386ff.; Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien*, 86ff.

<sup>394</sup> Lüpke, *Die Markgrafen der Sächsischen*, p. 8ff.

<sup>395</sup> In the royal charter of 958—Kienast, “Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich”, p. 318, 414.

<sup>396</sup> Kienast, “Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich”, 319.

<sup>397</sup> Kienast, “Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich”, 319f.

<sup>398</sup> Luitpolding—see: *Europäische Stammtafeln*, vol. 1.1, tabl. 83.

It was not until the reign of Otto II who consequently used the expression 'duke of Bavarians'.<sup>399</sup>

A similar, initially unsettled nomenclature (*comes*, *dux*, *marchio*) existed in the description of the status of Herman Billung (d. 973), the royal governor in north-east Saxony.<sup>400</sup> Identically, like in the case of other 'tribal' duchies of the empire which were coming to life, Herman Billung's successors were consequently addressed as *dux*.<sup>401</sup>

The margrave of the March of Meissen, Ekkehard I (d. 1002), was a figure who distinguished himself among a number of Saxon and, in general, German lords, who were politically active at the turn of the 10th century and were addressed by the authors of written sources as: *marchio*, *comes*, *dux*. In fact his significance during Otto III's later years can only be compared with the status that margrave Gero I had possessed. Suffice it to mention that this aristocrat became, on behalf of emperor Otto III, a direct senior of the Czech duke, Boleslav III, and he was, living in Meissen, also in control of the whole eastern policy of the empire. What is more, after Otto III's death Ekkehard attempted to aim for the royal rank and had some chances to be successful.<sup>402</sup> Yet he was still addressed as margrave. Seemingly, he also lacked the title of the duke to live in splendor, as we know from Thietmar that, around the year 998, he was awarded the ephemeral title of the duke of Thuringia, which was revived especially for him.<sup>403</sup>

In conclusion to the problem which has only been outlined here, it should be noted that in Germany the title of a duke was associated with the highest, after the king, honour and a certain independence from the central royal power. It appeared during the reign of Louis the Child, when the central power was slack, and later during the rule of Henry I, and Otto I in particular, when attempts were made to change it consequently into the expression

<sup>399</sup> *dux*, but also *dux Baiowariorum*—Kienast, "Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich", p. 321f., 409f.; pp. 323, 412.

<sup>400</sup> Hermann Billung (936–973) 956—addressed as *marchio* in royal documents, but also as *comes* and *dux*—Kienast, "Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich", pp. 327, 416; just like his successors: Goetz, "Das Herzogtum der Billunger", p. 189.

<sup>401</sup> Kienast, "Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich", p. 328.

<sup>402</sup> Danuta Borawska, "Margrabia Miśni Ekkehard i Ludolfingowie", *KH* 93 (1986), pp. 933–949; see also: Eduard Hlawitschka, "'Merkst Du nicht, daß Dir das vierte Rad am Wagen fehlt?' Zur Thronskandidatur Ekkehards von Meißen (1002) nach Thietmar, *Chronicon* IV c. 52", in *Geschichtsschreibung und geistiges Leben im Mittelalter. Festschrift für Heinz Löwe zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Karl Hauck, Hubert Mordek (Köln-Wien, 1978), pp. 281–311.

<sup>403</sup> Thietmar, p. 257 (5,7); *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 210.

*comes*.<sup>404</sup> This term was of the same rank as *dux*, apart from the fact that *comes* was rather a functional title—associated in the past, during the Carolingian times, with the term *missus*—which signified the proximity of the holder of such a title to the king.<sup>405</sup>

The title *dux* was particularly attractive, because, despite the reluctant attitude towards this title at the court of the monarch around the mid 10th century, it appears in Otto I's documents in order to distinguish the top ranking aristocracy in the state. It was originally used in redoubled titles: *dux et comes*, *dux et marchio*, but it also happened that it occurred only in single words: *dux*, *comes*, *marchio*.<sup>406</sup> It was not until the beginning of the 11th century when the term *dux* (duke) became the highest discriminant after the king of a rank in the state of the Liudolfings—while it retained its function to address foreign monarchs—and the position of such expressions as *marchio*, or *comes*, began to be perceived as slightly lower than the title of the *dux*, combining the two meanings of the words 'margrave' and 'count'.

### 1.3.4 Significance of Mieszko I's Titles of Power

At this stage, it is time after the above review to return, once more, to the records placed in the *Obituary Annals of Fulda* devoted to the Piast duke in order to ponder their meaning. Although the material presented does not let us come to very precise conclusions, some more general remarks can and should be made on the basis of this. First of all, of great significance is the fact of addressing the Polish ruler with the titles used exclusively for the local, German aristocracy, instead of using the term *dux* which could have some neutral connotations. This kind of records can be interpreted as indicative of a positive attitude of Mieszko by the people who wrote these notes.

The use of these titles cannot be regarded as an attempt to place the Piast ruler below the dukes of the empire, at the same level of meaning as margraves and counts. After all, we know that such a precise hierarchy was not in use then, and both the term *marchio* and *comes* were considered—when applied to local aristocracy—as synonyms of the term *dux*.

There is one more fact which compels us to scrutinize the Fulda obituaries. As far as the contemporary opinions concerning the status of power of the first Piast monarchs are concerned, it was usually the 'external' information

<sup>404</sup> Kienast, "Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich", pp. 314, 347.

<sup>405</sup> Brunner, "Der fränkische Fürstentitel", p. 185.

<sup>406</sup> Kienast, "Der Herzogstitel in Frankreich", p. 318ff.; the margraves Gero and Dietrich were usually addressed as *dux*, but also as *comes*, *marchio*, *dux et marchio*—*ibid.*, p. 327.

recorded by foreign chroniclers, which has been preserved. This case is different. The record made in Fulda is a document of the Piasts' own initiative. Even if the idea of leaving a donation in the monastery in return for the promise of prayers was not Mieszko I's personal initiative, but was an idea that came from, for example some of his clerics, the Polish party (the diplomatic mission with the gifts) still attempted to explain to the monks of the German monastery what the status of their benefactor was. And it was not until some later time when the monks of Fulda, on the basis of the information and their own categories of the perception and description of the world, tried to register the Polish ruler accordingly, and in their opinion in the most honest way, as the donation concerned the supernatural sphere.

It is important that both forms of the obituaries discussed here testify to a certain cultural acceptance of Mieszko I. However, the older entry needs to be given even a more careful consideration, where the author of the annotation inserted the ethnic expression of the benefactor—*Sclavus* in addition to the name and the abbreviated title. It is not certain whether the author was surprised, or whether he wanted to emphasize that even though Mieszko was a Slav, he was still a *comes*. The surprise here would be fully justified in the context of what we know about a certain exclusive attitude, in terms of the possible access to the elites, towards the Slavs shown by the ruling stratum in the state of the Liudolfings.<sup>407</sup> This had an even longer tradition in Frankish practices, and one should remember that the first cases of regarding the Slavs as inferior did not come from Germany.<sup>408</sup>

The matter is extremely interesting—after all, no other benefactor to the monastery in Fulda apart from Mieszko I got his own entry where his ethnic origin was noted, even if there are names of different people.<sup>409</sup> It cannot be ruled out that the expression *Scl[avus]* was added to the obituary of Mieszko

<sup>407</sup> Lübke, "Slaven und Deutsche", p. 59ff.; more optimistically about acceptance of the Slaves by the German élit: Christian Lübke, "Vethenici und Wettiner", *Beiträge zur Namenforschung, Neue Folge* 21 (1986), 401–428.

<sup>408</sup> However, one has to admit that this myth was keenly used in the Germany of the past; its traces could be found quite recently: see: Walther Kienast, *Deutschland und Frankreich in der Kaiserzeit (900–1270). Weltkaiser und Einzelkönige*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 9, 1, vol. 2 (Stuttgart, 1975), p. 252, where we can read e.g. that the German military and colonization effort extended the sphere of the western world, which had been weakened by the pressure of Islam in the west and the retreat (sic!) of the Germans from the Elbe territories; on the early mediaeval views: František Graus, *Die Nationenbildung der Westslawen im Mittelalter* (Sigmaringen, 1980), p. 149, where the Frankish terms applying to the Slavs: *foedissimum et deterrimum genus hominum*, or: *Rustica gens hominum*—c. 747/7; *gens perfida*—9th century; see also: Lübke, "Slaven und Deutsche", p. 62ff.

<sup>409</sup> Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien* (according to the index); Jakobi, "Die geistlichen und weltlichen Magnaten", p. 792ff.



later. If this was the case it should be interpreted as deprecating the benefactor. Unfortunately, the solution to the problem requires further detailed studies which go beyond the framework of this work.

Returning to what we can explore, we should notice that the titles used to single out Mieszko I, as contemporary German analogies show, refer to the ranks which drew their legitimacy from the power of the monarch. This fact, in addition to other circumstances which will be discussed below, allows us to suppose that the reason for a certain 'official' categorization of the Piast, performed by anonymous editors from Fulda, was the fact that this vaguely known Slav must have been associated with the emperor's court.

This observation can also tell us what the circumstances were of the meeting between Mieszko I and the representatives of the congregation in Fulda, and what the political background of this contact was. We know this very well from other examples that not only religious, or more precisely eschatological ideas stood behind the piety described, but also politics played the role of at least a guiding spirit in the selection of the form and direction of links with church institutions. It is important for better understanding the problem to appreciate the extraordinary status of the centre which remembered in its obituary tradition the name of the first historical Polish monarch.

The oldest monastery in Fulda was founded in 744 by Winfrid—Boniface, known as the apostle of Germania. This institution received an exemption (*exemptio*) in the same century, which placed it under Rome's direct protection, thus isolating the congregation of monks from the legal influence of the local bishop.<sup>410</sup> The autonomy of the prayer community was also under the protection of the king (*Königsschutz*) and numerous immunities. In the 10th century the abbey was acknowledged to be the most respected monastic centre in the state of the Liudolfings, which was reflected in a number of privileges, for example the *Primatus sedendi*, or the right of an honorary priority over all other monasteries in Germany, finally approved in 969.<sup>411</sup> However, in consideration of the excerpt under discussion which concerns Mieszko I's donation, of most significance is the information that the monastery in Fulda was always very close to the court of the eastern Frankish state, and later of the German.<sup>412</sup> The abbots played a considerable role in the diplomatic

<sup>410</sup> Hans E. Feine, *Kirchliche Rechtsgeschichte*, vol. 1 (Köln, 1972), p. 175f.

<sup>411</sup> Mechthild Sandmann, "Fulda: Kloster, 'Schule' und Bibliothek", *LMA* 4, pp. 1021–1022; Ulrich Hussong, "Studien zur Geschichte der Reichsabtei Fulda bis zur Jahrtausendwende", *Archiv für Diplomatik* 31 (1985), 1–225; 32 (1986), 129–304, 1986, p. 203ff.

<sup>412</sup> Hussong, "Studien zur Geschichte", 1986, p. 241ff.; Rudolf Schieffer, "Fulda, Abtei der Könige und Kaiser", in *Kloster Fulda in*, pp. 39–55, p. 52ff.

service of succeeding Liudolfings as arch-chancellors of the queen (empress). Also, a number of clerics from Fulda later became royal chaplains, and in consequence members of the German episcopate.<sup>413</sup>

It is worth mentioning that abbot Hatto II (d. 970) belonged to the most trusted advisors of Otto I, who rewarded him for the service by making him the archbishop of Mainz and the arch-chancellor of the empire.<sup>414</sup> He was also an important figure in the contacts of the emperor with the pope.<sup>415</sup> In the context of our investigation of some importance is the fact that Hatto's successor, Werner /Werinar/ (970–982), was a close relative of bishop Ulrich—the uncle who wanted to make him his successor in Augsburg.<sup>416</sup> Due to some formal reasons the monarch did not support him, but not because he was ill-disposed towards Werner. The abbot was active in a political service for Otto II, and he personally led his heavily-armed vassals on an expedition of the emperor to Italy in 982.<sup>417</sup> He also participated in the battle at Cotrone, where the Christian army was defeated, but he managed to escape as one of few members of the detachment provided by the monastery.<sup>418</sup>

In 985, during the tenure of Werner's successor, abbot Brandhold (982–991), an important convention was held in one of Fulda's branch monasteries, at Rohr, during which Henry the Quarrelsome had to return the underage Otto III to his mother.<sup>419</sup> Later on, during the administration of Hatto III (994–997), when—as we know—the first of the two obituaries concerning Mieszko I were written down in Fulda, the abbot of this monastery participated in the convention at Solingen in 994. It was then that he, together with some other renowned Church officials and secular dignitaries, handed

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<sup>413</sup> Zielinski, *Der Reichsepiskopat in spätottonischer*, pp. 77, 87n, 126f.; Hans Walter Klewitz, "Königtum, Hoffkapelle und Domkapitel im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert", *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 17 (1939), 102–156, p. 112.

<sup>414</sup> Hussong, "Studien zur Geschichte", p. 246ff.

<sup>415</sup> Schieffer, "Fulda, Abtei der Könige", p. 47.

<sup>416</sup> Althoff, *Amicitiae und Pacta*, p. 295ff.; Schieffer, "Fulda, Abtei der Könige", p. 46f.

<sup>417</sup> Hussong, "Studien zur Geschichte", p. 266 f.; Karl F. Werner, "Heeresorganisation und Kriegführung im deutschen Königreich des 11. und 11. Jahrhunderts", in *Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* 15, *Ordinamenti militari in occidente nell'alto medioevo* 30 marzo–5 aprile 1967, vol. 10 (Spoleto, 1968), pp. 791–847; Bruno Scherf, *Studien zum Heer der Ottonen und der ersten Salier: 919–1056* (Bonn, 1985); Schieffer, "Fulda, Abtei der Könige", p. 50f., note 78.

<sup>418</sup> He died in the backway to his homeland: Wehlt, "Reichsabtei und König", p. 279; Hussong, "Studien zur Geschichte", 1986, p. 266f.

<sup>419</sup> Hussong, "Studien zur Geschichte", 1986, p. 268f.; Wehlt, "Reichsabtei und König", p. 280.

the power over the empire to Otto III, which happened after the dubbing ceremony that confirmed the young ruler's adult age.<sup>420</sup>

The participation of the abbots of Fulda in the events which were the most important for the state allows us to assume that the mutual relations between the Piast ruler and the Saxon monastery must have taken place through the agency of the court, which included empress Theophanu's personal involvement. It should be noted that Werner was, as arch-chancellor, her leading official. The important role of the empress, as the person who had a considerable impact on her husband's policies, including the one towards the Slavs, has been very much emphasized by recent scholars.<sup>421</sup>

When we examine the history of relations that Mieszko I maintained with the German court, it was the above-mentioned convention of the lords of the empire at Rohr, which was held on the 29th of June 984, with the participation of the empress, the abbot of Fulda, Brandhoh (982–991) and, perhaps, the Polish ruler, that was the earliest event.<sup>422</sup> This meeting was attended, apart from an array of the German lords, by some Slavs, whose names were not mentioned by the Annalist of Quedlinburg.<sup>423</sup> A number of scholars believe that those were the same people, or at least their envoys, who earlier in Quedlinburg had participated in the election by acclamation of Henry the Quarrelsome, and as we know, Mieszko I had attended this event.<sup>424</sup>

This assumption is not directly confirmed by sources. There is, however, another circumstance which makes us suspect that during the convention an agreement was reached between the diplomatic service of empress Theophanu and Mieszko I, whose political consequences were reflected in the form of a political alliance in the following year.<sup>425</sup> We know that just around 984 the

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<sup>420</sup> Hussong, "Studien zur Geschichte", p. 270f.; see also: Orth, "Formen und Funktionen", pp. 128–170.

<sup>421</sup> Fried, "Kaiserin Theophanu und", p. 151ff.

<sup>422</sup> Bruno Gebhardt, *Handbuch der deutschen Geschichte*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1970), p. 265; Holtzmann, *Geschichte der sächsischen*, p. 297f.; Mathilde Uhlirz, *Jahrbücher des Deutschen Reiches unter Otto II und Otto III*, vol. 2: *Otto III. 983–1002* (Berlin, 1954), pp. 33–35, p. 430f.

<sup>423</sup> *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 472, a. 984: *Illā vero, conciliato primitus sibi divino subsidio, accelerato admodum itinere, cum nuru sua imperatrice Theophanu, matre regis, nec non illustri abbatis Machtilde filia sua, amita eiusdem regis infantis, comitantibus fratre suo rege Burgundiae Conrado, et duce Francorum eius aequivoco, cum totius Italiae, Galliae, Sueviae, Franciae, Lotharingiae primis; occursu quoque Saxonum, Thuringorum, Sclavorum, cum universis optimatibus, qui unitis animorum nisibus aut pro rege fideliter morituri, aut, quod Dei gratia factum est, victuri, Roza [Rara] convenere.*

<sup>424</sup> RGSEO 3, p. 33f. no. 233.

<sup>425</sup> More about the historical background: Waclaw Korta, "Miłsko i Łużyce w polityce pierwszych Piastów", *Sobótka* 45 (1990), 141–184; Labuda, *Studia nad początkami*, vol. 2, pp. 264–293; Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von*, p. 50ff.

abbot of the monastery of Memleben, Unger, became the Polish bishop, and at the same time he did not lose his office of head of his native monastery until 992.<sup>426</sup> His appointment could not happen without the consent of the monarchs, because the foundation of 981 for the Benedictines in Memleben was a joint achievement of Otto II and Theophanu, and it was to play an important role in the policy of the empire towards the Slavic countries.<sup>427</sup>

It is possible that the relations between Mieszko I and Fulda began even at an earlier date, after his marriage to Oda. At that time it was Werner (968–982) who held the office of abbot.<sup>428</sup> He was a relative of the bishop of Augsburg, Ulrich, and was perfectly suitable to serve as the intermediary between the Polish ruler and the centre of the cult, still in the early stages, of his uncle in Augsburg. The trace of such contacts has been preserved in the *miracula* which accompany the life of the saint. Strictly speaking, however, the devotion directed at this saint first materialized in 992 in Saxony, where the Piast ruler had maintained a military alliance from the mid 980s, when in Halberstadt the altar with the title of the bishop of Augsburg was built next to St. Maurice and St. Lawrence.<sup>429</sup> This circumstance suggests the establishing of relations between Mieszko I and Augsburg at a later date, but also then, during the tenure of Werner's successor, Brandhoh, the devotional contacts of the Piast with Fulda and the bishop's chapter in Swabia could have been initiated through the agency of one political centre, namely the court of the monarch. The groundbreaking convention at Rohr, where a turnabout can be observed within the structure of alliances and a possible rapprochement between the Polish ruler and the Ottonian faction occurred, took place in the branch monastery of Fulda. The Polish—Saxon alliance—which was customary at that time—should have been strengthened by relations of a sacred nature.

In any case, we know that from the mid 980s Mieszko I maintained a close alliance with the German court. At that time special presents served as one of the expressions of such deals. Thietmar informs us about one such gift, which was given by the Polish monarch to the emperor. The chronicler wrote that during the Easter convention of the 4th of April 986 at Quedlinburg, Mieszko recognized the suzerain power of Otto III and presented him with

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<sup>426</sup> Engels, "Theophanu—die westliche Kaiserin", p. 28; also: Günter Wolf, "Das Marienkloster zu Memleben", *Archiv für Diplomatik. Schriftgeschichte Siegel- und Wapenkunde* 41 (1995), 21–30.

<sup>427</sup> Fried, "Die Frauen und die politische", p. 30ff.

<sup>428</sup> Wehlt, "Reichsabtei und König", p. 278.

<sup>429</sup> Banaszkiwicz, "Mieszko I i władcy", p. 109.

a camel.<sup>430</sup> In return he also got some splendid presents.<sup>431</sup> Despite some doubts over the credibility of the bishop of Merseburg, no one who investigates this issue refuses to accept that a deal was struck then with the elites of the empire, which was reinforced with alliances of a smaller value—the relations established between the Piasts and some Saxon families. This alliance formed the basis of the policies of the Polish state in future decades.<sup>432</sup> Also Thietmar, usually reluctant to admit to the presence of the Slavs, or their relations with the political leaders of the empire, confirms a sort of acceptance of Mieszko by the elites of the empire of the Liudolfings.<sup>433</sup>

Towards the end of his life the Piast ruler was in fact the political figure whose status in the region was close to the most powerful aristocrats in eastern Germany, such as Bernhard Billung, the duke of Saxony, or Ekkehard, the margrave of Meissen. Of course, of great significance was the marriage of Mieszko I to the daughter of margrave Dietrich, which gave the Piast an access to some ideological values associated with the position of the emperor's in-law. After all, Oda, his wife, was considered to be related to the Liudolfings.<sup>434</sup>

Mieszko's position of the time was well reflected in a short commentary on the information about the participation of the duke in a courtly convention (Hoftag) which was held during the Easter celebration of 991. The German annalist wrote that among those who attended this meeting were, apart from the Saxon elites, margrave Hugh of Tuscany, Mieszko I, addressed as *dux Sclavonicus*, equal among other European dukes (*primi*).<sup>435</sup> This extremely important report tells us how the borders of the continent were perceived at that time. They were identical, in our region, to the territories under the control of the empire, or confederated with this state. This opinion was based on the assumption that in central Europe of the mid 990s it was Bohemia and Poland which formed the periphery of the Latin civilization. Both countries were in the process of integrating themselves, to a larger or smaller extent,

<sup>430</sup> The historiographer mistakenly reports on the year 985—Thietmar, p. 155ff.; (49); *The Chronicon*, p. 156; RGSEO 3, p. 38, no. 237f.

<sup>431</sup> Gifts were an inseparable element of the meeting of rulers—Ingrid Voss, *Herrschartreffen im frühen und hohen Mittelalter: Untersuchungen zu den Begegnungen der ostfränkischen und westfränkischen Herrscher im 9. und 10. Jahrhundert sowie der deutschen und französischen Könige von 11. bis 13. Jahrhundert* (Köln, 1987), p. 151ff.; Karl Hauck, "Tiergärten im Pfalzbereich", in *Deutsche Königspfalzen. Beiträge zu ihrer historischen und archäologischen Erforschung*, vol. 1., (Göttingen, 1963), pp. 30–74, especially 55ff.

<sup>432</sup> Ludat, "Piastowie i Ekkehardynowie", pp. 181–201.

<sup>433</sup> Schröder, *Völker und Herrscher*, p. 80ff.

<sup>434</sup> Borawska, "Mieszko i Oda", pp. 11–39.

<sup>435</sup> RGSEO, 3, p. 74f. (no. 259); Banaszkiwicz, "Mieszko I i władcy", p. 92.

with the empire. Such was also the understanding of the European borders in this region, as the area which was reached—through the agency of the empire of the Liudolfings—by the post-Carolingian civilization.

It should be stressed that one can read a certain vision of ‘new’ Europe into this view of the chronicler, and—as for example Gallus Anonymus wanted<sup>436</sup>—the country of the Poles was in a sense transferred from the territory of the ‘barbarian North’ to the circle of the civilization of the ‘South’, or the ‘Mediterranean’ as we would call it today.

Mieszko I indeed did a lot to come up to the expectations and represent the above mentioned community well, and he was successful despite a relatively difficult start. After all he began his career as a local ruler from outside the civilized territory, whose baptism had not been recorded by any contemporary sources.<sup>437</sup> If we investigate the whole period of his rule to try to identify the most important feature which let him reach such good results at the end of his life, one has to emphasize, first of all, that the first historic Piast ruler comprehended how the world which he wanted to be part of worked, and he was able to make use of his observations in practice. When it became necessary to fight with weapons for his position he did it well, even if against the lords representing the emperor whose authority he indeed recognized. This was experienced by margrave Hodo, an important political figure and the tutor of Otto I, when his troops were defeated in 972 during the attempt to violate the territory under the Piast’s control.<sup>438</sup> Perhaps even the detachments of Otto II, fighting against the duke in 979,<sup>439</sup> could find out about his military talents. Valour was always held in high regard. However, this whole military effort fitted the structure of a general arrangement whose Mieszko wanted to be part of. Although he led wars against the forces of the emperor, he did not do it to diminish the influence of the empire of the Liudolfings and the western civilization which came from there, but to achieve the best possible conditions of living alongside its representatives.

The military sphere, even though so important for those and other times, could not limit the wide scope of Mieszko I’s activity, as long as he wanted to be recognized as a fully credible Christian lord—partner of the German aristocracy and the monarch himself. He had to act also in the religious field. This activity is reflected by the devotional relations of the Piast with

<sup>436</sup> *Galli Anonymi Cronica*, p. 7; *Gesta principum Polonorum*, p. 13f.

<sup>437</sup> Jerzy Strzelczyk, “Die Christianisierung Polens im Lichte der schriftlichen Quellen”, in *Europas Mitte um 1000*, pp. 487–489.

<sup>438</sup> *RGSEO* 2, p. 226f., no. 163.

<sup>439</sup> *RGSEO* 2, p. 292f., no. 206a.

important cult centres in Fulda and Augsburg. His involvement in this sphere was particularly vivid in the act, which has not been mentioned yet, still very popular, of putting Mieszko's whole state under the protection of St. Peter. It is a difficult matter, extraordinarily complicated and discussed in numerous studies, which due to its individual meaning exceeds the thematic scope of this work. Therefore, it will not be analyzed here. One of its aspects, however, which is rarely mentioned, is worth noticing as it is related to the above-discussed issue. Here we should remember that this act, despite all possible political questions that it incurs,<sup>440</sup> belonged primarily to the sacred sphere. Mieszko I took his step, because he was possibly inspired by the last deed of margrave Gero.<sup>441</sup>

The motives as well as other particulars of Mieszko I's action are not clear. It is known, however, that the Piast ruler established a link with the pope, the representative and successor of St. Peter, who was the depositary of the power of Christ, and entrusted his state to his care.<sup>442</sup> By doing so, Mieszko crucially thus manifested the location of his country within the circle of the Latin Christian civilization, or—as it can be written by applying present criteria—within 'Europe'. Perhaps, this was documented in writing already during the Easter convention at Quedlinburg, where apart from Hugh of Tuscany, who was the representative of the imperial power in Italy and the superior of Rome, some envoys of the pope could or even should have been present.<sup>443</sup>

One year before his death and probably expecting its arrival, Mieszko I, husband of the honorable lady—Oda *senatrix*<sup>444</sup>—concluded his Christian

<sup>440</sup> Mieszko, a 'tributary to St. Peter', could not be anybody else's tributary, thus the opinions that the Piasts paid their tribute until 1000 raise natural doubts.

<sup>441</sup> Thietmar, p. 69 (2,19); *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 105; Schmidt, "Neue Quellen zum Verständnis", p. 212ff.; more about this person: Sankus, *Sächsischer Stammesadel und*, p. 386ff.; Althoff, *Adels- und Königsfamilien*, 86ff.

<sup>442</sup> Charlotte Warnke, "Ursachen und Voraussetzungen der Schenkung Polens an den heiligen Petrus", in *Europa Slavica—Europa Orientalis. Festschrift für Herbert Ludat zum 70. Geburtstag*, eds. Karl—Dietrich Grothausen, Klaus Zernack (Berlin, 1980), pp. 127–177; in all probability he did not break off his relations with the emperor with this act, unlike it was believed in the past: Ilse Scheiding—Wulkopf, *Lehnsherrliche Beziehungen der fränkisch-deutschen Könige zu anderen Staaten vom 9. bis zum Ende des 12. Jahrhunderts* (Marburg, 1948), p. 56.

<sup>443</sup> Lubomir Havlík, "Der päpstliche Schutz und die slawischen Völker. Zur Problematik der Herrschern in den Ländern Südost- und Osteuropa gewährten päpstlichen *patronatus-protectio*", in *Das heidnische und christliche Slaventum*, Annales Instituti Slavici, vol. 2.2: *Das christliche Slaventum* (Wiesbaden, 1970), pp. 10–32, especially: p. 25ff.

<sup>444</sup> The title of Mieszko I's spouse certainly of the classic Roman origin, whereas the ruler's himself—*iudex* (judge), peculiar, but sometimes in use—Herwig Wolfram, "Atanaric the

life by entrusting his legacy—the state with the established capital<sup>445</sup> and clearly marked borders, and his next of kin, wife and underage children,<sup>446</sup> to the spiritual protection—as it was believed—the mightiest power which had ever existed. It is difficult to find a more exalted gesture of the truly Christian monarch, which could have been perceived as a kind of profession of faith (*confessio*).<sup>447</sup>

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Visigoth: Monarchy or Judgeship. A Study in comparative history”, *Journal of Medieval History* 1 (1975), 259–278.

<sup>445</sup> Gerard Labuda, “Budownictwo sakralne Gniezna i Poznania na przełomie X/XI wieku w świetle źródeł pisanych”, in *Polska na przełomie I i II tysiąclecia. Materiały z sesji Stowarzyszenia Historyków Sztuki Poznań, listopad 2000* (Poznań, 2001), pp. 267–286, p. 269ff.

<sup>446</sup> Brygida Kürbis, *Na Progach Historii*, vol. 2: *O świadectwach do dziejów kultury Polski średniowiecznej*, (Poznań, 2001), pp. 243–282, p. 270, 273ff.

<sup>447</sup> Klaus Zernack, “Polska a Niemcy i Cesarstwo w X wieku”, in *Civitas Schinesghe*, pp. 27–33, p. 32.





## CHAPTER TWO

### INTEGRATION OF THE PIASTS' TERRITORIAL POWER INTO THE EMPIRE OF THE LIUDOLFINGS—OPINIONS OF THE GERMAN ELITES ON THE POLAND OF BOLESLAV CHROBRY

The rule of Boleslav Chrobry (992–1025), which is the subject of our consideration in this chapter, was an interesting and historically important period, abound in spectacular and dramatic events. The uniqueness of this epoch was best reflected in the closest ever rapprochement between the Polish and German states (the Gniezno Convention in 1000), and later—after the death of Otto III (1002) and the replacement of some of the ruling elites of the empire at the beginning of Henry II (1002–1024)'s reign—in the outbreak of a serious military conflict, which lasted for more than a few years.

In the atmosphere of disputes and uncertainties regarding the eastern policy of the empire of the Liudolfings, two extreme attitudes towards the Piasts and their state began to develop. Their character—undergoing a natural process of variation and evolution—marked the borders of German reflection on Poland, in fact, almost until the present.

The problem is important and at the same time extraordinarily broad. Here we can only concentrate on its origin, so complex and multifaceted that the analysis has to be divided into a couple of stages, which are best approached in a chronological order.

#### 2.1 THE POLISH RULER AND HIS COUNTRY IN GERMAN SOURCES C. 1000

It usually happens that those historians who are interested in the state of the Piasts in the period of the early years of Boleslav Chrobry's rule focus on the visit that emperor Otto III paid to Poland in 1000. This event obscures a number of problems which are associated with the initial stage in the rule of the second historic monarch of the Piast dynasty. This is the case due to the value of the emperor's expedition to Gniezno, but also its exclusive nature in the history of Polish—German relations. However, there are some matters regarding Boleslav Chrobry's rule which do not equal the Gniezno meeting, but are also very intriguing. Especially the first years in the rule of Mieszko I's successor are full of mysterious excerpts that appear in written

sources, which due to their vagueness and brevity are open to speculation and numerous interpretations.

The present chapter will mainly focus our analysis on how the situation in Poland shortly after Mieszko I's death was perceived and monitored in Germany. We will deal with a slightly later period to examine the character of descriptions and judgment on Boleslav Chrobry given by two German personalities: Brun of Querfurt and Thietmar of Merseburg. It will also be important in the context of these issues to have a look at the circumstances in which the name of the Piasts' state and its inhabitants appeared in sources around 1000 in the forms close to the contemporary ones.

### 2.1.1 *Vulpes callida—Power Struggle in Poland after Mieszko I's Death*

It should be expected that the change of the ruler in the neighbouring country, quite important for the eastern policy of the empire, concerned its political elite so much that it was reflected in the then German writing. Surprisingly enough, in what has been preserved from the literary legacy in the country of the Piasts' western neighbour not a single message contemporary to the event, which would say anything about the taking over of the Polish throne by Boleslav Chrobry, can be traced. The only information concerning the issue in question is contained in the chronicle by Thietmar, who wrote it some twenty years after the events. The bishop of Merseburg noticed in a quite laconic passage that:

on 25 May in the year of Incarnation 992 [...] the aforementioned duke [Mieszko] now old and feverish, went from this place of exile to his homeland, leaving his kingdom to be divided among many claimants. Yet, with fox-like cunning, his son Boleslav unified it once more in the hands of one ruler, after he had expelled his stepmother and brothers, and had their familiars Odilien and Przibiwoj blinded.<sup>1</sup>

It is noteworthy that the chronicler did not want to give the details of Boleslav Chrobry's actions directed against his stepbrothers and their supporters. The problem is quite intriguing as we know that Thietmar possessed perfect knowledge on the history of the region, and those events where not

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<sup>1</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, pp. 192–3; Thietmar, p. 225 (4,58): *..anno dominice incarnationis DCCCCXCII [...] et VIII Kal. Iunii prefatus dux [i.e. Mieszko] iam senex et febricitans ab exilio hoc ad patriam transit, reliquens regnum suimet plurimis dividendum, quod postea filius eiusdem Bolizlavus, noverca et fratribus expulsa execatisque familiaribus suis Odilieno atque Pribivoio, vulpina calliditate contraxit it unum.*

that chronologically distant from the time of editing his work, so they should have been remembered either by himself or his contemporaries.

The chronicler set his report in a longer story devoted to Mieszko I, his family, and the state. We could therefore think that it was the scope of the problem that induced the historiographer to take a deliberate decision not to extend one of its traits in order to maintain the lucidity of the structure in this part of his text. We know, however, that he disliked Boleslav Chrobry very much, and always tried, whenever an opportunity arose, to put in his text any information that would repudiate him. Thus it is surprising that he did not elaborate on the subject. In this case he only mentioned the injustice done to Chrobry's siblings, which he added to the description of the Piast's other vile that he had committed a few times. The end of this passage, which in a sense rounded up and generalized the matter without discussing it further, is typical of the chronicle by Thietmar in those places where its author wanted to pass over inconvenient facts, for example those which would harm the reputation of the Saxon lords contemporary to him.<sup>2</sup>

It seems that in order to further examine this issue one should examine the way in which the German historiography of that time in general perceived Polish affairs during the first eight years of the rule of Boleslav Chrobry. After all we know that Thietmar used different texts as the basis for the redaction of his work.<sup>3</sup>

There are not too many German accounts which contain information on the Polish rulers, and those available do not tell inside stories, but only quote other sources. Even though there were a few historiographic centres in the eastern part of the empire of the Liudolfings during the time under consideration, and Poland lay within their range, only the three of them recorded the information we need. The closest chronologically were the *Annals of Quedlinburg*, because their first redaction by an anonymous author began c. 1007 and continued in intervals till 1025.<sup>4</sup>

The home centre of the author of these annals, the collegiate church of St. Servatius in Quedlinburg, belonged together with a nearby Benedictine

<sup>2</sup> Thietmar, p. 329 (6,9); p. 331, (6,11); p. 484, (7,12).

<sup>3</sup> Helmut Lippelt, *Thietmar von Merseburg: Reichsbischof und Chronist*, Mitteldeutsche Forschungen 72 (Köln, 1973), 173ff.; *Thietmar von Merseburg*, (Einleitung), p. 26.

<sup>4</sup> Dieter Wojtecki, "Slavica beim Annalisten von Quedlinburg", *ZfO* 30 (1981), 161–194, p. 162; Wilhelm Wattenbach, Robert Holtzmann, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im Mittelalter. Die Zeit der Sachsen und Salier*, vol. 1: *Das Zeitalter des Ottonischen Staates (900–1050)*, ed. Franz-Josef Schmale (Weimar, 1967), p. 44ff.

nunnery to the most important royal foundations in eastern Germany.<sup>5</sup> Between 966 and 999 the office of prioress of the congregation was held by Mathilda, Otto I's daughter. From 997 she was also the regent on behalf of the emperor, who stayed in Italy.<sup>6</sup> After her death, Otto III's sister, Adelheid, became Mother Superior in the nunnery.<sup>7</sup> Quedlinburg witnessed a number of conventions of the lords of the empire, and the Piasts participated in most of them during the Ottonian period. It is certain that the monk, the editor of the annals, had deep insight into the eastern policy of the empire and must have known a lot about this relatively non-distant Slavic country.<sup>8</sup> Although the early rule of Boleslav Chrobry preceded the beginning of the edition of this work by more than a decade, the annalist possessed his own memory as well as the memory of his milieu at his disposal, and he could also use some older texts.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, if he wanted to describe the situation in the country of the Piasts in detail, he could easily do it.

In the Ottonian times, similarly close to the emperor's court was Hildesheim,<sup>10</sup> another Saxon centre which preserved information on the Piasts in its annalistic tradition. Today only the *Annal of Hildesheim the Younger*, compiled c. 1030 remains extant. The content of this source conveys, sometimes literally, some older entries of the lost annals, which are hypothetically reconstructed as *the Annals of Hildesheim the Older*.<sup>11</sup> It is known that this account was compiled in the monastery of St. Michael, established by bishop Bernward (993–1020), one of the closest advisors to Otto III.<sup>12</sup> Thus we should expect that this source could notice actions taken by the Piasts, close allies to the Liudolfings till 1002.

The source of knowledge close to the basis for the older German annals, which was utilized by the annalists of Quedlinburg and Hildesheim, was

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<sup>5</sup> Horst Fuhrmann, "Vom einstigen Glanze Quedlinburgs" in *Das Samuhel-Evangeliar aus dem Quedlinburger Dom*, eds. Florentine Muetherich, Karl Dachs (München, 1991), pp. 13–22.

<sup>6</sup> Thietmar, p. 197, (4,41); Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen*, 201ff.; Althoff, "Quedlinburg und Gandersheim", pp. 123–144.

<sup>7</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 41ff. (Introduction).

<sup>8</sup> Wojtecki, "Slavica beim Annalisten", pp. 161–194.

<sup>9</sup> Wattenbach, Holtzmann, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im*, vol. 1, p. 45; Wojtecki, "Slavica beim Annalisten", p. 162.

<sup>10</sup> Schubert, "Der Reichsepiskopat", pp. 93–102.

<sup>11</sup> Gerard Labuda, "Der 'Akt von Gnesen' vom Jahre 1000. Bericht über die Forschungsvorhaben und—ergebnisse", *Quaestiones Medii Aevi Novae* 5 (2000), 145–188.

<sup>12</sup> Daniel F. Callahan, "The Cult of St. Michael the Archangel and the 'Terrors of the Year 1000'", in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000. Religious Expectation and Social Change, 950–1050*, eds. Richard Landes, Andrew Gow, David C. van Meter (Oxford, 2003), pp. 181–204, p. 182.

used by the anonymous author of the *Annals of Niederaltaich*.<sup>13</sup> This time we face the work which was written in the centre less interested, for obvious reasons, in the matter of contacts between the German monarchs and Polish rulers than the previously mentioned Saxon church institutions. After all the monastery of Niederaltaich is located in Lower Bavaria, on the Danube, several dozen of kilometers to the north-east from Passau. Already in the Carolingian times a Benedictine monastery had been founded there, which later became a family abbey of the dukes of Bavaria, also the side line of the Liudolfings which ruled the country on and off between 948 and the close of the 10th century.<sup>14</sup> These annals, preserved until the present, were redacted till 1050. In their oldest part they date back in time to 708, and form the compilation of different earlier texts. The already mentioned *Annal of Hildesheim*, which has been lost, formed their basis in the section referring to the 10th century.

All the above introduced accounts show relatively considerable similarities as regards their attitude to the matter of contacts of the German monarchs with the Polish dukes. All the entries on the Piast rulers are in each of them quite laconic. They are usually limited to some basic information on the meetings between them and the lords of the empire, and on the participation of their troops in the German expeditions against the Elbe Slavs. At the same time, which is interesting, these sources devote much more attention to Mieszko I than, comparing the mentions proportionally, the first eight years of the rule of Boleslav Chrobry. Thus beginning with 985 and ending in 991 we can observe in these annals relatively detailed information on Mieszko I's contacts with the German court and his military contribution to the efforts of the army of the empire.<sup>15</sup> The presence of Chrobry's detachments in the campaign of 992<sup>16</sup> was only noticed by the *Annals of Hildesheim*.<sup>17</sup>

These annals inform the readers in a short entry that Otto III set off against the Lutizi, who had captured Brandenburg a year before. This action ended with success. In August 992, after a short-lasting siege this important

<sup>13</sup> Wattenbach, Holtzmann, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*, vol. 2, p. 545ff.

<sup>14</sup> Hubertus Seibert, "Bavvarica regna gubernans. Heinrich der Zänker und das Herzogtum Bayern (955–995)", in *Von Sachsen bis Jerusalem. Menschen und Institutionen im Wandel der Zeit. Festschrift für Wolfgang Giese zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Hubertus Seibert – Gertrud Thoma (München, 2004), pp. 123–142.

<sup>15</sup> *Annales Hildesheimenses*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH i.u.s. vol. 8 (Hannoverae, 1878), a. 985, a. 986, p. 24; a. 991, p. 25.

<sup>16</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 484f.

<sup>17</sup> The Annals of Quedlinburg inform only about the war 994 against the Slavs—*Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 984), similarly *Thietmar*, p. 171 (419).

stronghold was captured by the Germans. The source also mentions that Otto III was aided by the duke of Bohemia, Boleslav II, and Boleslav Chrobry, who did not take part in the expedition in person, but he sent a proper number of warriors to assist the emperor.<sup>18</sup> The duke defended his absence by the fact that his state was endangered by Ruthenia and a military conflict was looming.<sup>19</sup>

What is particularly important for us in the note by the *Annalist of Hildesheim* is the fact that for this author—as it comes from the logic of the entry—Boleslav Chrobry was a legal ruler of Poland, the successor of Mieszko I. In general, there is no reference in any of the German sources, except for the chronicle by Thietmar, to an internal power struggle in the country of the Piasts, or of any discontent of the German elites because of Chrobry's stepbrother's expulsion from Poland. And one could have expected this considering the fact that Oda's sons were related to the Saxon aristocracy, and in the second place—to the imperial house itself.<sup>20</sup>

A number of scholars examine another account which concerns the events of the day—the register of the document issued by Mieszko I, known as the *Dagome iudex*.<sup>21</sup> They conclude that the father, approaching his final years, intended by donating his state to St. Peter and through his alliance with Rome to strengthen politically his sons from his marriage to Oda—who were mentioned by their names in the document, to the disadvantage of the eldest son, whose name is missing from the letter. According to some theories, Boleslav Chrobry was designated by Mieszko I to rule the Little Poland, the province distant from the metropolitan Greater Poland,<sup>22</sup> which in the circumstances of the day would have signified the removing of the first-born from the rule of the country and subordinating him to his brothers.

However, the interpretation of this kind is not reflected in sources. It is inconsistent not only with the above quoted entry of the *Annal of Hildesheim*,

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<sup>18</sup> *Annales hildesheimenses*, p. 25: *Bolizlao vero, Misachonis filius, per se ipsum ad dominum regem venire nequaquam valens—imminebat quippe illi grande contra Rusianos bellum—, suos sibi satis fideliter milites in ministerium regis direxat.*

<sup>19</sup> Andrzej F. Grabski, *Bolesław Chrobry. Zarys dziejów politycznych i wojskowych* (Warszawa, 1964), p. 67f.; Karol Maleczyński, “Die Politik Ottos des III gegenüber Polen und Böhmen im Lichte der Meißener Bistumsurkunde vom Jahre 995”, in *Letopis Instituta za Serbski Ludospyt (Jahresschrift des Instituts für sorbische Volksforschung, Reihe B)* 10 (1963), 162–203, p. 198.

<sup>20</sup> Borawska, “Mieszko i Oda”, pp. 11–39.

<sup>21</sup> *Regesta Imperii*, 2: *Sächsische Zeit*, Abt. 5: *Papstregesten 911–1024*, ed. Harald Zimmermann (Wien-Köln-Weimar 1998), p. 214, no. 703.

<sup>22</sup> Henryk Łowmiański, “Bolesław Chrobry w Krakowie w końcu X wieku”, *Małopolskie Studia Historyczne* 4 (1961), 3–12.

but also with Thietmar himself, who did not write a single word on cutting Boleslav off the major part of the inheritance from his father, which Greater Poland formed. Due to the brevity of the bishop of Merseburg's report, we know nothing about the regulations concerning the division of the country, the number of the successors, and which lands were inherited by each of them. There is no doubt that it was Mieszko's first-born son who became the supreme ruler of the divided state.

Some more light on the origins of Boleslav Chrobry's rule in Poland could be shed by a very late account included in some Bohemian annals—as long as we acknowledge the credibility of the information whose authorship is ascribed to Vacláv Hajek of Libočan. According to this source, Boleslav Chrobry continued to co-rule with his brothers for three more years before he expelled them from the country.<sup>23</sup> In fact scholars either ignore this entry almost completely,<sup>24</sup> or do not treat it seriously because of its modern origin and complete lack of other sources which could verify its content. The problem is quite complex. It is, as a matter of fact, a separate subject for scholarly examination. It is only mentioned here so as to complement the context of our analysis.

Having considered all this, the circumstantial evidence suggests that Chrobry's crackdown on his stepmother and his brothers indeed took place in 995. We need to take a deeper insight into this issue whose understanding will allow us, as we believe, to comprehend the way in which the chronicler, Thietmar, made a selection of information for his narrative, as well as other German authors of his day, who were interested in the eastern policy of the Liudolfings, did it.

Returning to the historical matter, it should be noticed that Otto III, after achieving a relative success of his expedition to the territory of the Elbe Slavs in 992, organized another one three years later. It was the first time when the emperor participated in a military action as its commander-in-chief. This was a large-scale operation; the emperor's troops were enforced not only by the Saxons, but also other ethnic groups from the Germany of the day. In addition, some military aid was provided by Boleslav the Premislid and

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<sup>23</sup> *Boleslaus cum fratribus regnavit tribus annis, dein solus—Wenceslai Hagek a Liboczan, Annales Bohemorum e bohémica editione latine redditi* (Pragae 1772), p. 409; see: Labuda, *Studia nad początkami*, vol. 2, p. 252f.

<sup>24</sup> Zakrzewski, *Bolesław Chrobry Wielki*, p. 83ff.



Sobeslav of the Slavnik dynasty, both from Bohemia.<sup>25</sup> This time also Boleslav Chrobry made a personal appearance and brought his troops.

Considering the scale of this enterprise, the expedition did not meet the expectations. What was even worse was that things in another area under the influence of the empire took an unfavourable turn. In Bohemia the supporters of the Premislids captured the main stronghold of the Slavnik dynasty, Libice, and murdered all the present brothers of duke Sobeslav, who was at that time aiding the troops of Otto III. This fact was significant not only for the domestic affairs in Bohemia, because the Slavnik family, related to the Liudolfings,<sup>26</sup> had belonged for half a century to the group of allies of the empire. The other of the two surviving brothers, Adalbert, who was staying in Rome, was popular among the German elites. After all, he was received by Otto III's mother, Theophanu, at her court, and the young emperor was himself also impressed by the piety and charisma of the would-be martyr.<sup>27</sup>

It is noteworthy that in this situation none of the German sources, not even the chronicle by Thietmar, mentions, if only briefly, or allusively, the crime committed on the Slavnik family.<sup>28</sup> A relatively extensive entry written in the *Annals of Quedlinburg* on the great expedition of Otto III to the Elbe territory in 995 does not contain any information concerning Polish or Czech reinforcements.<sup>29</sup> The *Annals of Niederaltaich* are only restricted to providing a short passage on the destruction of the country of the Abodrites by the royal troops.<sup>30</sup> Only the *Annals of Hildesheim* confirm a considerable contribution of the troops under Boleslav Chrobry and the Czech detachments,<sup>31</sup> but even they do not notice the participation of St. Adalbert's brother, Sobeslav, in this event, knowing nothing about the crime in Libice, or the political changes in Poland.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>25</sup> RGSEO 3, p. 131f., no. 301; about the Slavniks: Michal Lutovský, Zdeněk Petráň, *Slavníkovci* (Praha, 2004).

<sup>26</sup> *S. Adalberti Pragensis Episcopi et Martyris Vita altera auctore Brunone Querfurtensi*, MPH, Sn. vol. 4.2, ed. Jadwiga Karwasińska (Warszawa, 1969), p. 3, p. 26f.

<sup>27</sup> *S. Adalberti Pragensis Episcopi et Martyris Vita prior*, MPH, Sn. vol. 4.1, ed. Jadwiga Karwasińska (Warszawa, 1962), p. 33, (c. 22), p. 34f. (c. 23).

<sup>28</sup> See also: *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, pp. 486–490; RGSEO, 3, p. 131f., (no. 301).

<sup>29</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 486.

<sup>30</sup> *Annales Altahenses maiores*, MGH SS i.u.s 4, ed. Edmund von Oefele, (Hannover, 1890), p. 15: *Oddo rex Abodritos vastat*.

<sup>31</sup> *Annales Hildesheimenses*, p. 26: *Rex Abodritos vastavit, urbes et oppida disiecit; occurritque in auxilium Bolizlau filius Misaco cum magno exercitu, necnon Boemani cum filio alterius Bolizlau venerunt; recepitque se rex in Saxoniam incolumni*.

<sup>32</sup> The concurrence in time between the expedition to the territory behind the Oder river and the crime in Libice is known only by the life of St. Adalbert and the chronicle by Cosmas—*S. Adalberti Pragensis Vita prior*, p. 38, (c. 25)—*Vita Adalberti. Früheste Textüberlieferungen*

The only Polish affairs that were noticed by the authors of the above mentioned annals, which are indirectly associated with the information on the days before the year 1000, are short entries devoted to the martyrdom of St. Adalbert (997). In the *Annals of Quedlinburg* this event was precisely dated and annotated that the martyr was the bishop of Prague.<sup>33</sup> The *Annals of Niederaltaich* showed only a passing interest in this matter,<sup>34</sup> and the *Annals of Hildesheim*—ignored it completely. It was Thietmar who devoted the most attention to St. Adalbert of all the mentioned texts. Unfortunately, we cannot find in his entry on the bishop of Prague any precise information on the reasons for his departure from Bohemia, or a mention that his mission had started in Poland and had been supported by Boleslav Chrobry.<sup>35</sup>

This problem is interesting and important, and it will be discussed further down in this chapter. Now, adhering to political issues, we should notice that a brief review of German historiography indicates that nothing suggests that the alliance between Poland and the empire suffered, even slightly, as a consequence of the expulsion of Boleslav Chrobry's stepbrothers from the country.

There is only one written source, not a narrative though, but a legal document, which brings us the information about a certain amount of friction in the mutual Polish-German relations of the day. In Frankfurt am Main on 6th December 995, in the same year of the Piast duke's support for the emperor, Otto III issued a privilege for the bishop of Meissen, Eid,<sup>36</sup> which guaranteed his diocese a very extensive territory. Under his control were

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*der Lebensgeschichte Adalberts von Prag*, ed. Jürgen Hoffmann (Essen, 2005), p. 153; S. *Adalberti Pragensis Vita altera*, p. 26ff. (c. 21), *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica Boemorum*, ed. Bertold Bretholz, MGH SS NS 2 (Berlin, 1923), p. 53 (1,29); the fact that St. Adalbert's and his family's fate did not arouse much interest in Germany contradicts the arguments by Fried that the oldest life of this saint was written in this country—see: Johannes Fried, "Gnesen-Aachen-Rom. Otto III. und der Kult des heiligen Adalbert. Beobachtungen zum älteren Adalbertsleben", in *Polen und Deutschland*, pp. 235–279; see also: Gerard Labuda, "W sprawie autorstwa i miejsca napisania *Żywotu pierwszego Świętego Wojciecha*" SZ 42 (2004), 115–130.

<sup>33</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 492: *Adalbertus episcopus de Praga civitate a Prucis glorioso martyrio IX. Cal. Maii coronatur*.

<sup>34</sup> *Annales Altahenses maiores*, p. 15f.: *Adalbertus episcopus martizatur*.

<sup>35</sup> Thietmar, p. 181f., (428); this fact missed by historiography—e.g.: Peter Hilsch, "Der heilige Adalbert in der neueren deutschen Historiographie", in *Tausend Jahre Benediktiner in den Klöstern Břevnov, Braunau und Rohr*, ed. Jürgen Hofmann (St. Ottilien, 1993), pp. 147–156; Ekkehard Eickhoff, *Kaiser Otto III. Die erste Jahrhundertwende und die Entfaltung Europas* (Stuttgart, 1999), p. 41ff.; see also: Elżbieta Dąbrowska, "Cluny a św. Wojciech. Relacja *Historia libri quinque Rudolfa Glabera o męczeństwie św. Wojciecha*", KH 110 (2003), 5–13 (similar little news about Poland in French sources).

<sup>36</sup> *Kodeks Dyplomatyczny Śląska*, ed. Karol Maleczyński (Wrocław, 1958), vol. 1.1, no. 3, pp. 9–12.

to had been found the territories then occupied by Bohemia and Poland, namely the northern areas of the state of the Premislids and half of the Lower Silesia.<sup>37</sup> The bishopric in Lusatia did not have any chances to expand to such extensive territories—for different reasons,<sup>38</sup> also because of a possible objection of the archbishop of Mainz, whose jurisdiction extended onto the whole of Bohemia and, as it seems, southern Poland.<sup>39</sup>

The peculiarity of the content has always made this privilege of Otto III an interesting source and provoked numerous discussions among scholars.<sup>40</sup> Its authenticity has also been questioned a few times,<sup>41</sup> which idea has probably been abandoned once and for all.<sup>42</sup>

When in some interpretations made by historians no frictions are noticed in the mutual relations between Boleslav Chrobry and Otto III, they try to explain the meaning of the document by the fact that the lands to be included in the diocese of Meissen had been in truth nobody's. Another interpretation is that there was a mistake in outlining the borders of poorly known areas. As a matter of fact, it was not possible for the borderland lying among the three countries, which was militarily significant and, according to archaeologists, relatively well developed, to remain unknown for the Germans at that time.<sup>43</sup> The only sensible and possible explanation of the origin of Otto III's privilege is that this was not a real attempt to extend the area under control of the bishop of Meissen, Eid, but the author wanted to demonstrate his hostility towards Bohemia and Poland. Such an attitude towards the Premislids, who frequently harassed the German rulers, seems justified, and particularly after they had taken the Slavník family apart.<sup>44</sup> As far as the Piasts are concerned, the only possible motive of the hostile claims towards them, which comes to mind in the light of the information we possess, would be the reaction of the German elites to the news on the expulsion of Chrobry's stepbrothers

<sup>37</sup> Maleczyński, "Die Politik Ottos III", p. 169; Leyser, "The Ottonian government", p. 740f.

<sup>38</sup> It was then that the principle was becoming increasingly widespread according to which the borders of the diocese should be identical to the borders of the state—Roman Michałowski, *Zjazd Gnieźnieński. Religijne przesłanki powstania arcybiskupstwa gnieźnieńskiego*, Wrocław 2005, p. 15ff.

<sup>39</sup> Gerard Labuda, "Czeskie chrześcijaństwo na", pp. 73–98.

<sup>40</sup> RGSEO, vol. 3, p. 141f. (no. 309); Theo Kölzer, Thomas Ludwig, "Das Diplom Ottos III. für Meißen", in *Europas Mitte um*, vol. 2, pp. 764–766; also: Maleczyński, "Die Politik Ottos des III", pp. 162–203.

<sup>41</sup> Labuda, *Fragmety dziejów Słowiańszczyzny*, p. 129ff.

<sup>42</sup> RGSEO, vol. 3, p. 143 (no. 309); Jürgen Petersohn, "König Otto III. und die Slawen an Ostsee, Oder und Elbe um das Jahr 995", *FMS* 37 (2003), 99–139, p. 113ff.

<sup>43</sup> Stanisław Rosik, "Najdawniejsze dzieje Dolnego Śląska (do roku 1138)", in *Dolny Śląsk. Monografia historyczna*, ed. Wojciech Wrzesiński (Wrocław, 2006), pp. 15–54.

<sup>44</sup> Petersohn, "König Otto III. und", p. 113ff.

and his stepmother. In this case, this fact would have happened around the early autumn of 995. It thus coincided with the events in Bohemia. What is interesting is that also this important section of the eastern borderland of the empire witnessed some significant decisions which were associated with the Polish issue. The northern march—which at that time had been for many years in possession of the counts of Haldensleben, the family of Oda, Mieszko I's wife—was taken over by their opponent, Liuthar, the senior of the Walbeck family.<sup>45</sup>

The series of events outlined here can justify a sarcastic comment made by Thietmar, who imputed Chrobry that he had managed 'with fox-like cunning' to seize the whole legacy of his father. The chronicler probably suggested that the duke had waited for the right moment to remove his stepbrothers from their provinces without risking a conflict with the empire. There is no doubt that the author did not want to elaborate on the problem which he only signaled. The weight of this matter—it was not only about the events in the country of the Piasts, but also about the removal of the relatives of the Saxon aristocracy—tells us that, as a matter of fact, the chronicler failed to develop this subject not because of his conviction that it was trivial. There must have been different reasons for that. The simplest possible explanation is that even though the bishop of Merseburg hated the nature of the actions taken by Chrobry, he also expressed opposition to the monarch of Germany's lack of reaction. This modest account by Thietmar of the coup in Poland seems to be the result of a compromise between his willingness, or even sense of duty to record the whole situation, and the disgust which he felt because of the injustice done to the relatives of the Saxon aristocrats, and the concessions of the monarch in this respect in particular.

If we compare the nature of the selection of information, which was devoted to the Polish rulers from 985–1000, made by Thietmar with what can be observed in the above mentioned annals, we can notice their concurrence. And it is not about the amount of information—in this respect the chronicle by Thietmar surpasses the contemporary annals. There are structural similarities. In both cases Mieszko I occurs quite often—in the work by the chronicler the Polish ruler is additionally praised for his compliance and co-operation with the monarch of the Liudolfings. In the case of Boleslav Chrobry, however, the information tends to be fragmentary. Quite important year 995 was comparatively devoted the most attention in the *Annal of Hildesheim*, the source compiled in the centre which after 1002 was in some

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<sup>45</sup> RGSEO, vol. 3, p. 36 no. 235.

sort of disfavor with the new monarch, Henry II, as its representatives distanced themselves from the ruler's newly started policy of the empire.<sup>46</sup> As a matter of fact, this exception does not put aside the rules which shaped the attitudes of the German historiography of the day towards Poland.

Every time there was any news in chronicles or annals about the contacts of the empire with Boleslav Chrobry, it boiled down to a kind of underestimating, or sometimes ignoring his relations with the state of the Liudolfings. Also, the contacts of the Polish ruler with St. Adalbert, who was held in high esteem among the Ottonian elites, were not recorded and—what is noteworthy—there was silence whenever the Piast ruler became successful and more powerful in the political hierarchy of the region, to the disadvantage of some old Saxon families.

### 2.1.2 *Amicus familiaris—Relationships between Boleslav Chrobry and Margrave Ekkehard I*

The problem of the attitude of the Piast state towards the empire in the 990s is associated with a certain important question, noticed by the chronicler Thietmar. At one stage in his work he remarked that:

with flattery and threats, he [i.e. the margrave of Meissen, Ekkehard I] won Duke Boleslav [III] of Bohemia, called 'the Red', for his military service and turned the other Boleslav [Chrobry] into [his friend].<sup>47</sup>

The bishop of Merseburg did not mention when the situation he described had happened and what it really meant.

The account by the chronicler is related to the above discussed problem of Otto III's issuing a document for the bishop of Meissen, Eid. This clergyman was in a sense the court bishop of the margrave, so this document cannot have been edited without the knowledge and consent of Ekkehard, who at that time played the major role in the eastern policy of the empire.<sup>48</sup> The significance of the margrave of Meissen and his attitude towards the Slavic

<sup>46</sup> Schubert, "Der Reichsepiskopat", pp. 93–102.

<sup>47</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 210: *into a personal ally*—what it is not identical with the original—Thietmar, p. 257, (V, 7): *Boemiorum ducem Bolizlavum, qui cognominatur Rufus, ad militem sibi [i.e. Ekkehard] aliumque [i.e. Boleslav Chrobry] ad amicum familiarem blanditiis ac minis adipiscitur.*

<sup>48</sup> Waltraud Bleiber, "Ekkehard I. Margraf von Meissen (985–1002)", in *Deutsche Fürsten des Mittelalters*, eds. Eberhard Holtz, Wolfgang Huschner (Leipzig, 1995), pp. 96–111, p. 103ff.; Jacek Banaszkiwicz, "Otton III jedzie do Gniezna. O opravie ceremonialnej wizyty cesarza w kraju i stolicy Polan", in *Trakt cesarski. Ilawa-Gniezno-Magdeburg*, eds. Wojciech Dzieduszycki, Maciej Przybył (Poznań, 2002), pp. 277–315, p. 283.

rulers, and Boleslav Chrobry in particular, are most important for the question of Polish-German relations. For us, in the context of this book, the most important is the way they were presented by Thietmar, who was the only author to closely monitor the situation.

The term *amicitia*, used by the bishop of Merseburg, could not have meant, as we know,<sup>49</sup> ordinary friendship,<sup>50</sup> but it determined a certain political arrangement with a previously agreed social and legal character. This agreement was sometimes based on partnership, but sometimes resembled future feudal allegiance.<sup>51</sup> The position of Boleslav Chrobry with regard to Ekkehard is not clear, we can only try to better understand it by looking at some analogies. The meaning of the arrangement named *amicita* was discussed in detail in the first part of this work (1.2.2.) and we know that the institutional friendship served Henry I as the tool to build up his rule over Germany.<sup>52</sup> This solution was applied also by other Liudolfings.<sup>53</sup> There is no reason to return to these problems. However, one should examine one more example of *amicitia*, which concerns the Piast ruler himself.

The chronicler of the first years of the rule of Henry II, Adalbold of Utrecht, shows—in a slightly distorting mirror, yet still revealing some important details—a very interesting arrangement between Boleslav Chrobry and the duke of Bohemia, Boleslav III the Red in 1002. He writes about this relation in the following way:

so between these two Boleslavs a false friendship arose, a deceitful comradeship. They often invited one another and stayed together in joy.<sup>54</sup>

This short note makes us realize that *amicitia* possessed the features typical of a future feudal allegiance, namely ceremonial visits of partners, feasting, demonstrating joy of the existence of the arrangement, common talks—all these phenomena were in future labeled in Latin as *concilium*. The above

<sup>49</sup> See chapter 1.2.2 of this book.

<sup>50</sup> Jedlicki, "Układ Merseburški z", p. 748.

<sup>51</sup> Epp, "Rituale frühmittelalterlicher 'amicitia'", p. 19f.; Gerd Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik im Mittelalter. Kommunikation in Frieden und Fehde* (Darmstadt, 1997), p. 203.

<sup>52</sup> Kaeding, Kümmerlen, Seidel, "Heinrich I.—ein 'Freundschaftskönig'", p. 265–326.

<sup>53</sup> Karl Schmid, "Das Problem der 'Unteilbarkeit des Reiches'", in *Reich und Kirche vor dem Investiturstreit. Vorträge beim wissenschaftlichen Kolloquium aus Anlass des achtzigsten Geburtstags von Gerd Tellenbach*, ed. Karl Schmid (Sigmaringen, 1985), pp. 1–15, p. 6f.

<sup>54</sup> *inter illos igitur duos Bulizlavos fit amicitia ficta, fit societas subdola. Sepe alter ab altero invitatur, sepe alterius sumptibus iocunde convivantur—De 'Vita Heinrici imperatoris' van bisschop Adelbold van Utrecht*, ed. Hans van Rij, *Nederlandse Historische Bronen 3* (Amsterdam, 1983), pp. 44–95, p. 92 (c. 45); The German edition: "Adalbold von Utrecht, Vita Heinrici II imperatoris", ed. Markus Schütz, *Bericht des Historischen Vereins Bamberg 133* (1999), pp. 135–198, p. 192.

discussed examples (1.2.2.) show that amicitia was also associated with the obligatory military aid to the benefit of the partners, which was known in feudal terminology as *auxilium*.<sup>55</sup>

A feudal group had always had its hierarchy and the leader. In the case of the already quoted passage written by Thietmar, the dominance of margrave Ekkehard over the duke of Bohemia was obvious, and also other accounts confirm the Premislid's vassal submission to the powerful lord of Meissen.<sup>56</sup> Most probably also the Polish ruler was obliged—to a certain degree with mutuality<sup>57</sup>—to respect the views of the margrave in his political dealing. This arrangement, as the chronicler reveals, was, at least partially, extorted by Ekkehard, who used a certain threat. We do not know what this threat could have concerned, but in fact, the association of the words written by Thietmar with the content of the Meissen document suggests itself, because its execution would have posed a serious threat to the Piasts' interests.<sup>58</sup> The available sources do not bring any other grounds for the bishop of Merseburg's statement.

In order to shed more light on the situation in question, we should take a closer look at the description of the margrave of Meissen written by Thietmar. The historiographer emphasized that Ekkehard's family belonged to the most prominent aristocracy of eastern Germany. Their inherited lands were located between the Unstrut and the middle Saale rivers in Thuringia, and from there they started their expansion towards the Slavic Lusatia.<sup>59</sup> An important point in the career of Ekkehard's father, Gunther, was the death of margrave Gero I in 965. Then Otto I divided Gero's great eastern march, which included part of eastern Thuringia and the whole of Lusatia, into six smaller marches. It was Gunther who turned out to be one of the emperor's nominees for the post of the margrave of Merseburg and assumed his office.

Ekkehard's family paid for their participation in the 974 rebellion of Henry the Quarrelsome (also the future margrave of Meissen belonged to

<sup>55</sup> Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik*, pp. 199–229.

<sup>56</sup> There is information about several attempts which were made to place Thiegdag, who was not tolerated by the Bohemian ruler, Boleslav II, on the bishopric in Prague—more about it: Bleiber, "Ekkehard I. Margraf", p. 108; and: Sobiesiak, *Bolesław II. Przemyślida*, p. 183ff.

<sup>57</sup> Just like in the later case of the agreement with Henry II—see: Johannes Fried, *Otto III. und Boleslaw Chrobry. Das Widmungsbild des Aachener Evangeliiars, der "Akt von Gnesen" und das frühe polnische und ungarische Königtum* (Stuttgart, 1989), p. 70.

<sup>58</sup> Contrary to Petersohn's opinion, see: Petersohn, "König Otto III. und", p. 132.

<sup>59</sup> Borawska, "Margrabia Miśni, Ekkehard I", pp. 933–949; Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von*, p. 27ff.; Bleiber, "Ekkehard I. Margraf von", pp. 96–111.

the Bavarian's camp) with the temporary loss of their march, but in 979 their finally regained their fiefdom together with the favour of Otto II.<sup>60</sup> Also in the same year, or shortly after that, Ekkehard married Swanhild, the daughter of the powerful lord from northern Saxony, Herman Billung, the widow of the margrave of Meissen and Merseburg, Thietmar (d. 979), and sister of the duke of Saxony, Bernhard.<sup>61</sup> Thanks to this marriage, the significance of Ekkehard in the circle of the eastern German elite grew a lot, because according to the inheritance law he could aspire to at least part of the lands which had belonged to the late husband of Swanhild.<sup>62</sup>

After the battle at Cotrone (Cappo Colonne) in 982, where Gunther got killed, and especially after the death of the emperor himself, the period of anarchy and confusion began in Germany. This time, however, Ekkehard did not support Henry the Quarrelsome. On the contrary, he joined, together with the archbishop of Mainz, Willigis, and the duke of Saxony, Bernhard, the finally victorious Ottonian party. Soon an opportunity arose to make use of the political assets resulting from his close relations with the court of Theophanu.

In 985 margrave Rikdag died, who had possessed threemarches: of Merseburg, Zeitz, and the most important—Meissen. Ekkehard managed to win favour with Theophanu, who entrusted him with the fiefdoms left by Rikdag. The matter of Ekkehard's assuming his territorial power over Meissen was complicated by the fact that this stronghold had been garrisoned with a number of troops of Boleslav II, the duke of Bohemia, who with the consent of Henry the Quarrelsome had taken over this important strategic point, which in a sense formed the northern entrance gate to Bohemia.<sup>63</sup> Nevertheless, within a short period of time—and we do not know how—Ekkehard dealt with his opponent and captured the promised march together with its capital. Some scholars assume that this spectacular success of the margrave could have been possible thanks to the aid of the Piast army.<sup>64</sup> They refer here to the *Annals of Quedlinburg*, which recorded some involvement of the troops of Mieszko I in the fights against some Slavs.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>60</sup> Bleiber, "Ekkehard I. Margraf von", p. 98f.

<sup>61</sup> Thietmar, p. 195 (439); Gerd Althoff, "Die Billunger in der Salierzeit", in *Die Salier und das Reich*, ed. Stefan Weinfurter, Odilo Engels, vol. 1 (Sigmaringen, 1991), pp. 309–329.

<sup>62</sup> Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von*, p. 195f.

<sup>63</sup> Joachim Huth, "Neues über Missions- und Frühgeschichte des Bistums Meißen und seiner Nachbarn", in *Das heidnische und christliche*, pp. 76–85.

<sup>64</sup> RGSEO 3, p. 36ff., no. 236; Korta, "Milsko i Łużyce", p. 153f.

<sup>65</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 473f.



There is some evidence pointing to the possibility of the existence of an alliance between the Polish ruler and Ekkehard c. 985. The most important, in addition to the entry placed in sources on the Piasts' rapprochement with the emperor's court, is the fact that in 1002, after Ekkehard's death, Boleslav Chrobry aspired to the rule over themarch of Meissen.<sup>66</sup> Strangely enough, the aspirations of the Piast duke were supported by the brother of the late margrave, Guncelin, and recognized by some east-German aristocrats. All this—according to the German classic medieval historian, Herbert Ludat—justifies the conclusion that there must have been a kind of arrangement of Ekkehard with the Piasts, whose subject was their close co-operation in Lusatia.<sup>67</sup>

Although these problems lie, as a matter of fact, in some other research areas, they are mentioned here, because they form the background for the stance of Thietmar under discussion. Only the understanding of the meaning of the rapprochement which happened between the Piast party and the Saxon elites allows us to fully investigate the bishop of Merseburg's view of the whole matter. It seems that the main feature of the way in which he built his narration in this case was the most laconic, as if out of a sense of duty, mentioning of the situation, but without any special insight into its essence, because he did not like it.

A good example of this kind of approach can be noticed when the chronicler reports on the family relations of Guncelin, Ekkehard's brother with Boleslav Chrobry. It happened two times, which eliminates the mistake, that Thietmar addressed the Saxon count as brother of the Piast ruler.<sup>68</sup> By the same token, the chronicler never applied this word or a similar one to Ekkehard, or the third brother, Brun.<sup>69</sup> Apart from this, we possess no other information which could explain, or at least suggest any interpretation of the message given by the bishop of Merseburg. German historiography favours the hypothesis according to which Guncelin and Chrobry married sisters. Family connections would justify applying such terms. The matter is uncertain though, because even in today's Poland, as it was the custom of

<sup>66</sup> Korta, "Milsko i Łużyce", p. 160ff.

<sup>67</sup> Herbert Ludat, *Słowianie—Niemcy—Europa*, ed. Jan M. Piskorski (Marburg - Poznań, 2000), p. 20.

<sup>68</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 275 (5,18), p. 301 (5,36); Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder*, p. 20ff.; Robert Holtzmann, "Beiträge zur Geschichte des Margrafen Gunzelin von Meißen", *Sachsen und Anhalt. Jahrbuch der Historischen Kommission für die Provinz Sachsen und für den Anhalt* 8 (1932), 108–129.

<sup>69</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 391 (6,55).

traditional Slavic communities, the brotherhood expressions are used only among relatives, not among in-laws. In this case it would be more probable that Guncelin was only Ekkehard's stepbrother, while his mother came from within the circle of Boleslav Chrobry's relatives. Guncelin's half-Slavic descent would explain not only his explicitly inferior social standing in relation to Ekkehard, but also the fact that the Slavic part of the garrison of Meissen favoured him.<sup>70</sup>

One has to add that the customs of the archaic times—the epoch of our considerations stood on their threshold—knew the institution of artificial brotherhood. It was established according to a certain rite and was of a certain, socially recognized and legally binding standing.<sup>71</sup> It seems, however, that such cases, where individuals were involved, were in the time under discussion quite exceptional, so when this sort of brotherhood was formed between Boleslav and Guncelin the chronicler would have probably described it further.

The difficulty incurred by some passages in the work by Thietmar is that he sometimes thought that the matter was obvious and there was no need for any explanations. It also happened, however, that the issue was not known to the wider public, but its nature, context, and the facts related to it were not accepted by the chronicler, and he simply did not want to discuss an unpleasant question.

Thietmar conveyed another important message in a similarly unclear way. This time he wrote about the family background of Boleslav Chrobry's consort, Emnilde. He only considered it appropriate to write that she was a daughter of Dobromir, whom he named 'an honourable duke'.<sup>72</sup> This issue will be discussed below (3.2.2.). Now, we only mention it to complete the collection of the chronicler's reports concerning the relations of the Piasts with the march of Meissen. We favour the view once expressed by Herbert Ludat that the territorial power of Dobromir must have been located somewhere in Lusatia, near the territories taken by the family of Ekkehard.<sup>73</sup>

<sup>70</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 261 (5,9).

<sup>71</sup> Max Pappenheim, "Über künstliche Verwandtschaft im germanischen Rechte", *ZRG Germ. Abt.* 29 (1908), 304–333; see also: Klaus Oschema, "Das Motiv Blutbruderschaft: Ein Ritual zwischen Antike, Mittelalter und Gegenwart", in *Riten, Gesten, Zeremonien. Gesellschaftliche Symbolik in Mittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, eds. Edgar Bierende, Sven Bretfeld, Klaus Oschema (Berlin – New York, 2008), pp. 41–71.

<sup>72</sup> *venerabilis senior—Thietmar*, p. 225f. (458).

<sup>73</sup> Ludat, "Piastowie i Ekkehardynowie", p. 193ff.

The aforementioned scholar believed that until as late as 1002 the relations between the Piasts, the family of Ekkehard, and the secret father of Emnilde, duke Dobromir, formed the basis for the political stability in the region to the west of the middle Oder river. Ludat dates the beginning of this political arrangement to 985, when the Slavic allies aided the margrave in his action of capturing Meissen. After this invasion Ekkehard began to play on the Slavic—German borderland the role similar to that of Gero I in the past.

From his capital in Meissen, the key stronghold in Lusatia of the day, which controlled the main route from the north of Bohemia and Lower Silesia, the margrave secured the sphere of influence of the state of the Liudolfings. And he also, together with the Saxon duke Bernhard Billung had an impact on the whole Slavic policy of the empire. With this respect they possessed a formal consent of the queen regents: Theophanu—who died in 991, next Adelheid—till 994, and finally Otto III himself.<sup>74</sup> During the latter's independent rule the role of Ekkehard even increased. The emperor appreciated his energetic help in quelling the rebellions in Rome between 997 and 998.<sup>75</sup> Towards the end of Otto III's rule Ekkehard became the German secular aristocrat who maintained the closest relations with the court.<sup>76</sup>

### 2.1.3 Dominus<sup>77</sup> [Sclaviniae]<sup>78</sup>—*Sources on the Events of 1000*

German historiographers were only slightly more interested in the visit Otto III paid to the capital of the Piast state than in the period of the early rule of Boleslav Chrobry. The oldest annals mentioned it no more than perfunctorily. The annalist of Quedlinburg knew only the religious justification for the emperor's undertaking, namely his pilgrimage to the grave of St. Adalbert.<sup>79</sup> This author wrote that devotional needs of the monarch resulted from the shock he had experienced after the three deaths of his relatives: a family member and friend<sup>80</sup>—pope Gregory V, his grandmother—empress

<sup>74</sup> Borawska, "Margrabia Miśni Ekkehard".

<sup>75</sup> Bleiber, "Ekkehard I. Margraf von", p. 107.

<sup>76</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 197 (440).

<sup>77</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 263ff. (V,10)—Boleslav Chrobry identifying epithet.

<sup>78</sup> *Sclavinia (Sclauania)* is the name one of the four women—the personifications of the four countries paying homage to the majesty of Otto III (or: Henry II?)—more on this below.

<sup>79</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, pp. 510–512.

<sup>80</sup> See: Teta E. Moehs, *Gregorius V. 996–999. A Biographical Study*, Pápste und Papstum 2 (Stuttgart, 1972).

Adelheid,<sup>81</sup> and his aunt—Mathilda, the abbess of Quedlinburg.<sup>82</sup> In his attempt to comfort the *orphaned homeland* (*patriam desolatam*) the emperor headed to the north and, as soon as he crossed the Alps,

to his feet came (making an obeisance) the whole Gaul, Francia, and Swabia.<sup>83</sup>

Further on, the chronicler describes in a poetic and stylistically exaggerated way how the people of both sexes from Thuringia and Saxony, together with the emperor's sisters, Sophia and Adelheid, feasted their eyes on Otto *like* [mother] *on an only child*.<sup>84</sup> He, however, being inspired, following his imperial ancestors, and thinking about the law of God, did not content himself with his subjects' adoration and set off to the territory of the Slavs.<sup>85</sup> In this case one can read between the lines the annalist's conviction that the emperor's decision was a kind of challenge, the sign of his deep piety, or even his ascetic way of life. The text, written *post factum*, put the emphasis, first of all, on eschatological aspects of the ruler's actions. There is, however, a passage which should attract our particular attention. The annalist notices that Otto

was hosted with the highest respect by the Slavic duke, Boleslav, and given different presents and a tribute, which had been collected from this whole land. It would have been impolite to accept any of [these] at that time, because he was there not to take goods and presents, but to pray and give.<sup>86</sup>

One should stress that according to the annalist of Quedlinburg the emperor could not accept tributes from the country of the Piasts only then. The bottom line is that in other circumstances this sort of dues would have been absolutely suitable and proper. Our informer did not explain what prevented Otto from taking his tribute and enjoy his presents. The only explanation could only be the fact that the period of the emperor's pilgrimage was regarded as the time of sacrifices and ascetic practices, and it was improper

<sup>81</sup> (ca. 931–d. 999)—Werner Goetz, *Lebensbilder aus dem Mittelalter. Die Zeit der Ottonen, Salier und Staufer* (Darmstadt, 1998), pp. 66–82 (Kaiserin Adelheid).

<sup>82</sup> † 999—Althoff, *Otto III*, p. 132; Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen*, p. 201ff.

<sup>83</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 510f.

<sup>84</sup> The *topos* expression (?)—see: *Canonici Wissegradensis continuatio Cosmae*, ed. Georg Pertz, MGH SS vol. 9 (Stuttgart, 1983), pp. 132–148, p. 135.

<sup>85</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 511f.: *Ille vero evangelici non immemor praecepti, quo dicitur: Primus querite regnum dei, [Matt. 6,33] iuxta morem parentum suorum imperatorum omnia sua divina regi ac meliorari exoptans clementia humili devotione Slaviam sanctum Adalbertum nuper pro Christo laureatum adiit eiusque interventum obnixius petiit.*

<sup>86</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 511f.: *Ibi summo conamine a duce Slavonico Bolizlavone susceptus xenii omnigeni census ubique terrarum studiosissime quaesisti obsequialiter donatur, licet nihil tunc temporis ex his acceperit, quippe qui non rapiendi, nec sumendi, sed dandi et orandi causa eo loci adventasset.*

to sully it with worldly, material pleasures. We are dealing, of course, with a certain reality created by the source, whose structure does not have to be closely linked with real events, or not directly anyway. In this case it is the filter of the annalist's outlook on life which serves as the intermediary here. It mainly let through this information which suited the author, other—if it were there at all—was placed in such a structure that they were subordinated to the ideas and arguments of the narrative. This is why the passage in question of the *Annals of Quedlinburg* first of all shows us, if we take into consideration the relations between the Piast ruler and the German monarch, the former's full subordination to the emperor, and in accordance with the view of the writer.

In this place it is justified to remember the words that we already know, written by Thietmar, who indulging himself in criticizing the policy of Otto III towards Boleslav Chrobry wrote emphatically:

May God forgive the emperor for making a lord out of a tributary and raising him to the point...<sup>87</sup>

The stance of the bishop of Merseburg is, as we can see, on a par with the view of the annalist of Quedlinburg. They both expressed the view that it would be natural for Boleslav Chrobry to pay tributes to the emperor. The only difference between them is that Thietmar put the blame on Otto III for his objecting to the 'natural' order of things established by God, when he changed the status of Boleslav.

The issue has already been discussed (chs. 1.2.3 and 2.2.2). Then we indicated that the skimpy information of the sources suggest that towards the close of the 10th century the Piast rulers were probably obliged to deliver some military aid to the emperor.<sup>88</sup> The views represented by Thietmar and the annalist of Quedlinburg were recorded during relentless fights of the new monarch, Henry II, with Boleslav Chrobry and they seem to be typical of political ideas of the circles hostile to the Piasts, which were close to the court of the last of the Liudolfings.

The picture of mutual relations between the Slavs and the empire and in the tone similar to the aforementioned opinions is brought by the paean to Henry II by Leo of Vercelli. This Italian bishop, once Otto III's close col-

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<sup>87</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 212, (5,10).

<sup>88</sup> There are numerous references concerning reinforcements delivered by the Piasts to the empire, whereas the information about Mieszko I's tribute is only provided by *Thietmar*, p. 89, (2,29).

laborator, and later—which was quite unusual for the circle of the dead emperor—an ardent supporter of the rule of Henry II wrote these words:

They rush from all parts of the world	coming to Henry
Bavaria is triumphant,	Francia serves bravely,
Swabia groveled,	refusing her betrayal
Lotharingia extends her hand,	Thuringia remains loyal.
Warlike Saxonia rushes	prepared to [accept her]
	subordination
A Slav receives his usual yoke	once again in his dishonor,
To serve with a tribute,	as he has done before <sup>89</sup>

It is true that there is some room for the Slavs in the above presented outline of the countries subordinated to the power of Henry II, but not on the same principles which were for the other peoples. We should observe, let alone the case of 'dishonouring tribute', that the quoted phrases in general use the attributes of the countries, and such a style served to highlight the peoples which possessed their political organizations respected by the authors of the day. Leo of Vercelli uses personification, not the name of the country, only with regard to the Slavs, which suggests that when the poem was written (c. 1003)<sup>90</sup> there was no room in the view of the elites that surrounded Henry II for the political organization of the Slavs which would be on equal terms with the other provinces within the system of power accepted by the German monarch. The only 'natural' status of the Slavs in the above mentioned scheme was to be the role of a tribute payer. It was, of course, a certain general view, because short-lived alliances with the political organization of the Slavs were formed, as it is proven by the alliance of Henry II with the Lutizi, based, what is noteworthy, on their military contribution to the German expeditions, not a tribute.<sup>91</sup>

<sup>89</sup> *Festinat mundus undique ad Heinricum currere/Triumphat Baioaria, fortis servit Francia./Collum cassa fallatia flexit Alemannia./Dat manus Lotharingia, fida est Turingia./Pugnax currit Saxonia ad subiectum obvia./Recepit iugum solitum Slavus in opprobrium./Ut sub tributis serviat, sicut quondam fecerat.*—Leo von Vercelli, *Versus de Ottone et Heinricho*, MGH (Abt. 5 saec. 1, vol. 5. 2): *Poetae latini* 5.2, ed. Karl Strecker (Leipzig – Berlin, 1937–39), pp. 480–483, p. 482; more about Leo of Vercelli: Heinrich Dormeier, "Kaiser und Bischofsherrschaft in Italien: Leo von Vercelli", in *Bernward von Hildesheim*, pp. 103–112; Roland Pauler, *Das Regnum Italiae in ottonischer Zeit* (Tübingen, 1982), pp. 33–45.

<sup>90</sup> Stefan Weinfurter, "Der Anspruch Heinrichs II. auf die Königsherrschaft 1002", in *Papstgeschichte und Landesgeschichte. Festschrift für Hermann Jakobs zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Joachim Dahlhaus, Armin Kohnle, Jürgen Miethke, Beihefte zur AfK 39 (Köln, 1995), pp. 121–134, p. 132f.

<sup>91</sup> More on this p. 2.3 of this book.

Let us now return to the interrupted analysis of the accounts by the annalists in order to examine how they commented on the establishing of the archbishopric of Gniezno, which was the most important event, from a historical perspective, associated with the emperor's visit to the country of the Piasts in 1000.

The already mentioned annalist of Quedlinburg did not write a single word about the fact that the Church metropolis was established following Otto III's will. The only trace of his knowledge of the subject, which is obvious, could be the words that Otto III did not want to accept any presents from Boleslav, because he arrived in his country not to take, but to give. However, we will not find in the text the completion of the meaning of the phrase, as there is no mention what exactly the Piast ruler got from the generous emperor. Exceptions are the annals of Niederaltaich<sup>92</sup> and of Hildesheim.<sup>93</sup> Both these accounts in the form available today are secondary sources, as they are dependent on the older, lost texts, whose content must have been transformed. They also bear a very close resemblance to each other. These texts tell us the emperor organized the synod in the country of the Slavs, whose agenda was the establishing of the Church metropolis with seven bishoprics for Gaudentius, St. Adalbert's brother. That is all. No other details concerning this event can be found in these accounts. At the same time, the latter of the mentioned annalists, who wrote his works before the mid 11th century in Hildesheim, most seemingly tried to introduce his own amendments to the older accounts whose content was unclear for him. Thus he associated the action taken by the emperor in year 1000 with Prague and mentioned Boleslav III from Bohemia as the ruler asking the German monarch for establishing the archbishopric in his country.<sup>94</sup>

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<sup>92</sup> *Annales Altahenses maiores*, p. 16: 1000 [...] *Imperator causa oracionis ad sanctum Adalbertum episcopum et martyrem Sclaviam intrat, ibi synodi habita septem episcopia disposuit et Gaudentium, fratrem beati Adalberti, monachum archiepiscopum ordinari iussit.* next the annalist reports a visit paid by the emperor and Boleslav the Brave in Magdeburg (Palm Sunday), Quedlinburg at Easter, and next Aachen.

<sup>93</sup> *Annales Hildesheimenses*, p. 28: *Imperator Otto III. causa orationis ad sanctum Adalbertum episcopum et martirem quadragesime tempore Sclaviam intravit; ibique coadunata sinodo episcopia septem disposuit; et Gaudentium, fratrem beati Adalberti, in principali urbe Sclavorum Praga ordinari fecit archiepiscopum, licentia Romani pontificis, causa petitionis Bolizlavonis Boemiorum ducis, ob amorem potius et honorem sui venerandi fratris, digni pontificis et martiris.*

<sup>94</sup> See: Knut Görich, "Ein Erzbistum in Prag oder in Gnesen?", *ZfO* 40 (1991), 10–27; Gerard Labuda, "O badaniach nad zjazdem gnieźnińskim w roku 1000. Spostrzeżenia i zastrzeżenia", *RH* 68 (2002), 105–156, p. 122ff.

This was written, however, when the country of the Piasts found itself on the sidelines of the German elites' sphere of interest, and the role of the empire's ally in Central Europe together with the name of the Slavic territory linked with the empire had been taken over from the Polish rulers by the Premislids long ago.

It is the chronicle by Thietmar which can serve, to a certain extent, as the key for the analysis of other sources that describe the events of 1000. The bishop of Merseburg, even though his text was also exposed to a certain tendency, tried diligently to collect facts and even mentioned tritely those issues that did not suit him.

Therefore, let us have a closer look at the details of the meeting between Otto III and Boleslav Chrobry as shown in the work by the bishop of Merseburg. According to Thietmar, the news on miracles taking place thanks to St. Adalbert was among the main the reasons for the decision the emperor took to organize the Gniezno expedition. He also wanted to say his prayers over the grave of the martyr.<sup>95</sup> The style of the narration suggests that the decision was taken by Otto III spontaneously, and his march towards the capital of the state of Boleslav Chrobry was hasty. Perhaps, there was a text, now lost, devoted to St. Adalbert which in this place served as the basis for the story by Thietmar. It is suggested by the mention of the ruler's immediate decision—a mark of the motif, frequent in hagiography, of a certain illumination which seizes a man and of its consequences in the form of a sudden need to contact the grave of a martyr.

The emperor, craving miracles, led Roman cardinals with him to the north. Their exact number remains unknown.<sup>96</sup> The ruler was also accompanied by the patrician Ziazo and the papal *oblationarius* Robert, and perhaps by some other secular and ecclesiastical dignitaries.<sup>97</sup> The matter of significance of these aristocrats and the meaning of their presence in the ruler's retinue, which were not explained by the chronicler, go beyond the framework of this monograph and form a separate problem for further studies. They are only mentioned here, apart from the necessity to show the content of the

<sup>95</sup> Thietmar, p. 203ff. (444); see also: Ekkehard Eickhoff, "Basilianer und Ottonen", *Historisches Jahrbuch* 114 (1994), 10–46; and: Ursula Swinarski, *Herrscher mit den Heiligen. Kirchenbesuche, Pilgerfahrten und Heiligenverehrung früh- und hochmittelalterlicher Herrscher, ca. 500–1200*, (Bern – Frankfurt/Main, 1991), p. 185ff.

<sup>96</sup> Stephan Kuttner, "Cardinalis. The History of a Canonical Concept", *Traditio* 3 (1945), 129–214; Hans W. Klewitz, "Die Entstehung des Kardinalkollegiums", *ZRG Kan. Abt.* 25 (1936), 115–221; Carl G. Fürst, *Cardinalis. Prologomena zu einer Rechtsgeschichte des römischen Kardinalskollegiums* (München, 1967).

<sup>97</sup> Thietmar, p. 203 (444).



account, primarily in our attempt to show how Thietmar selected and presented information.

The chronicler, after all very well informed, did not know anything about the alleged tribute collected by Boleslav for the emperor entering his country. But he mentioned it briefly—which may have been the reason for starting the motif of tributes in the work by the annalist of Quedlinburg—that the Piast had prepared a splendid reception. Next Thietmar focused on the description of Otto III's pious behavior: the emperor, barefooted and with a prayer on his mouth, penitentially entered Gniezno. Later he prayed in church, in front of the grave of St. Adalbert. After this description our source moves on to the issue of establishing the archbishopric by the emperor. In this respect Thietmar is quite precise as he mentioned not only the name of Radim, brother of St. Adalbert who became the archbishop, but also the number of deputies together with their names and the list of their dioceses. The most important is the fact, however, that despite introducing the structure of the Polish metropolis, the chronicler doubted in its legal foundations. He did it in his own manner: writing quite ambiguously:

Nec mora, fecit ibi archiepiscopatum, ut spero legitime, sine consensu tamen prefati presulis [id. Vungero], cuius diocesi haec regio subiecta est.<sup>98</sup>

The usual translation of this sentence is the following:

Without delay, he established an archbishopric there, as I hope legitimately, but without the consent of the aforementioned bishop [i.e. Unger, from Poznań] to whose diocese this whole region is subject.<sup>99</sup>

This translation does not convey the subtle doubtfulness in the legitimacy of the establishing of the archbishopric, which was suggested by the author for instance in his usage of the present form of 'est' to indicate the subordination of the whole country to the church administration of Unger. What is more important is that Thietmar, apparently accepting the emperor's decision to set up the archbishopric, in truth wanted to show that it stood in contradiction to the canon law. After all, another translation, which is perhaps even more precise, is suitable in this situation:

without delay, he established an archbishopric there, but I am afraid that illegitimately, because without the consent of the aforementioned bishop to whose diocese the whole region is subject.

<sup>98</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 207ff. (445).

<sup>99</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 183; in German edition: *Thietmar von Merseburg*, p. 163: *hoffentlich war er dazu befugt*.

The issue of the alleged, formal objection of Unger to establishing the archbishopric in Gniezno is quite doubtful, because had it been the case the institution could have never been founded. The canon law explicitly required the consent of the local bishop whenever any changes pertinent to its future were to be introduced.<sup>100</sup> And the chronicler himself claims that the archbishopric was indeed established during Otto III's stay in Gniezno. The historiographer from Merseburg worked on his text after the imprisonment of the bishop of Poznań in Magdeburg in 1004 and after his death in captivity in 1012. It cannot be ruled out that Unger, the old man who was approaching the end of life<sup>101</sup> and finding himself under pressure from his persecutors, could have been forced to make some declarations regarding the time of the foundation of the Gniezno metropolis. These problems have already been discussed several times and there is no need to return to them.<sup>102</sup>

Of more significance is the issue of the reason for Thietmar's deep aversion to Boleslav Chrobry, especially that he did not hesitate to shape his text so as to—balancing on the edge of the truth—challenge the legal foundations for the existence of the archbishopric in Gniezno. Perhaps, in this case it was not only personal animosity that mattered but also the fact that the chronicler opposed any traces of the civilizational emancipation of the Slavs from the supervision of their 'German'<sup>103</sup> guardians.

This attitude made the chronicler skip a number of important details concerning the meeting between Otto III and the Piast ruler. And it is not important that he used a skilful platitude to describe the splendor of the reception given out by Boleslav to honour the emperor.<sup>104</sup> What is more meaningful is

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<sup>100</sup> Helmuth Beumann, "Entschädigungen von Halberstadt und Mainz bei der Gründung des Erzbistums Magdeburg", in *Ex ipsis rerum documentis*. Beiträge zur Mediävistik. Festschrift für Harald Zimmermann zum 65. Geburtstag, ed. Klaus Herbst (Sigmaringen, 1991), pp. 383–398; Gerard Labuda, "Utworzenie metropolitarnej organizacji Kościoła polskiego na synodzie w Gnieźnie w dniach 9–10 marca 1000 roku", in *Milenium synodu-zjazdu gnieźnieńskiego*, ed. Jerzy Kłoczowski (Lublin, 2001), pp. 29–54; Michałowski, *Zjazd gnieźnieński*, p. 241ff.

<sup>101</sup> († 1012.)—Jerzy Strzelczyk, "Unger. Bischof von Posen", *LMA* 8, p. 1234f.

<sup>102</sup> Stanisław Trawkowski, "Wokół początków arcybiskupstwa gnieźnieńskiego", in *Ludzie—Kościół—Wierzenia. Studia z dziejów kultury i społeczeństwa Europy Środkowej (średniowiecze—wczesna epoka nowożytna)*, ed. Wojciech Iwańczak, Stefan K. Kuczyński (Warszawa, 2001), pp. 109–123; Roman Michałowski, "Początki arcybiskupstwa gnieźnieńskiego", in *1000 lat Archidiecezji Gnieźnieńskiej*, eds. Jerzy Strzelczyk, Janusz Górny (Gniezno, 2000), pp. 27–48.

<sup>103</sup> Inverted comas in this case mean the attempt to move away the 'national', as we would say it these days, factor. Thietmar's stance was not contingent upon any nationalism, but upon the sense of historical order, which was based primarily on the mission to organize the Christian world by the monarch of the Reich—more on this—chapter 3.3.3. in this work.

<sup>104</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 205ff., (445).

that he does not write a single word on the gestures of the emperor, mentioned by Gallus Anonymous and highlighted in other accounts,<sup>105</sup> which were aimed to elevate Boleslav Chrobry to the rank of a king.<sup>106</sup> Thietmar was very well informed about the whole issue. Therefore, at a certain stage of his work he could afford to emphatically oppose Otto's concession to Chrobry.<sup>107</sup> And even the fact itself, which he recorded, of the Piast ruler's present for the emperor in the form of 300 horsemen<sup>108</sup> for his expedition to Italy, can be situated within the framework of the practice of elevating Slavic rulers to the royal rank—which is suggested, among other sources, by the later Czech analogy.<sup>109</sup>

The chronicler's dissent from a political rapprochement of the emperor with the Piast ruler is also visible in his demonstrative concealment—which is interesting as the author was a clergyman—of the fact that Otto III was presented the relics of the arm (the right one) of St. Adalbert. This sort of gifts usually served as a sacred complement to a political bond<sup>110</sup>—which was rejected by Thietmar in this case.

The Gniezno thread ends with the information that Boleslav accompanied Otto on his return journey to Magdeburg and stayed there together with the emperor for Palm Sunday, which was at that time a holiday important for the ideology of political power.<sup>111</sup> It remains unclear, due to the lack of any information, what role the Piast ruler played in the procession organized on that day. It was customary for the ruler to assume the pose of Christ entering Jerusalem.<sup>112</sup> The fact presented by Thietmar that Otto and Boleslav

<sup>105</sup> *Ademari Cabannensis Chronicon*, ed. Pascale Bourgain, *Corpus Christianorum. Continuatio Mediaevalis* 129 (Turnhout, 1999), p. 154, (3, 31).

<sup>106</sup> Fried, *Otto III. und Boleslaw*, p. 123ff.; Elżbieta Dąbrowska, “Relikwia Gwoździa św. w Notre Dame w Paryżu darem Ottona III”, in *Magistro et amico amici discipulusque. Lechowi Kalinowskiemu w osiemdziesięciolecie urodzin*, eds. Jerzy Gadomski, Władysław Bulsza, Lucyna Sadko (Kraków, 2002), pp. 643–654; or: Elżbieta Dąbrowska, “La relique Saint Clou de la Couronne de Pologne aujourd'hui à l'église Notre-Dame de Paris”, *Bulletin de la Société Nationale des Antiquaires de France* (1991/1993), 48–57.

<sup>107</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 262ff. (5,10).

<sup>108</sup> Heavy cavalry so called *loricati*—see: Karl F. Werner, “Heeresorganisation und Kriegsführung im deutschen Königreich des 11. und 11. Jahrhunderts”, in *Settimane di studio del centro italiano di studi sull'alto medioevo* 15, *Ordinamenti militari in occidente nell'alto medioevo* 30 marzo- 5 aprile 1967, vol. 10 (Spoleto, 1968), pp. 791–847.

<sup>109</sup> More on this—chapter 3.3.3 of this book.

<sup>110</sup> Banaszkiwicz, “Otto III jedzie do”; Třeštík, “Von Svatopluk zu”, p. 125.

<sup>111</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 209ff. (446); *RGSEO*, vol. 3, p. 179ff. (no. 340).

<sup>112</sup> Ernst Kantorowicz, *Selected Studies* (Locus Valley, 1965), pp. 37–75; Gerald Beyreuther, “Die Osterfeier als Akt der königlichen Repräsentanz und Herrschaftsausübung unter Heinrich II. (1002–1024)”, in *Feste und Feiern im Mittelalter. Paderborner Symposium des Mediävistenverbandes*, eds. Detlef Altenburg, Jörg Jarnut, Hans-Hugo Steinhoff (Sigmaringen,

spent these holidays together suggests the latter's considerable involvement in the procession of the emperor entering the town. A formal presentation of Chrobry's prominent position must have been made then, after his elevation with the Gniezno concessions, within the system of power with the German monarch on top. The probability of this kind of event can only be assumed, however, by the chronicler's irritation, shared most likely by part of the Saxon elites.

Luckily, in addition to the written sources which documented German opinions on the Gniezno convention, there are also images which, unlike the aforementioned concise accounts,—as representing the advocates of Otto III's idea—illustrate how the Piast state was perceived within the political system of Europe around 1000.<sup>113</sup>

Two miniatures, very similar to each other, included in German codices which date back to the early 11th century show images of the Slavic land among the personifications of other countries. Even though no literary commentaries were attached to the pictures apart from the inscriptions *Scлавinia/Scлавania*, the historical context suggests that these imageries are associated with the state of Boleslav Chrobry. We know that Otto III, during his stay in Gniezno, issued a document for bishop Hieronymus of Vicenza which contains the expression *in Scлавania in civitate Gnesni* as the place where it was written.<sup>114</sup>

The first of the two miniatures—made probably slightly earlier than its twin picture—is an illustration of a lost codex. Today this composition is included in the book with the work by Joseph Flavius entitled *The Jewish War*, housed in Bamberg.<sup>115</sup> The image was inserted in the volume at an

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1991), pp. 245–253; see also: Gordon Kipling, *Enter the King. Theatre, liturgy, and ritual in the medieval civic triumph* (Oxford, 1989).

<sup>113</sup> We shall not deal with the dedicatory miniature from the *Aachen Book of the Gospels* in an erudite edition by Johannes Fried. We share the author's opinion that Otto III wanted, or perhaps even crowned Boleslav the Brave. However, for some reasons, which remain undisclosed to us, this act was never sanctioned. This issue goes beyond the subject of our dissertation.

<sup>114</sup> *Ottonis III diplomata*, ed. Theodor von Sicke, MGH DD, vol. 2 (Hannover, 1893), p. 778f., no. 349, or: *Regesta Imperii*, 2, Abt. 3, pp. 747–748, no. 1350; commentary: Jerzy Strzelczyk, *Otto III* (Wrocław 2000), p. 112f.; Graus, *Die Nationenbildung der Westslawen*, p. 151ff.

<sup>115</sup> Bamberg, Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Class. 79; vol. 1v, 1ar—see also: Wolfgang Ch. Schneider, "Imperator Augustus und Christomimetes. Das Selbstbild Ottos III. in der Buchmalerei", in *Europas Mitte um 1000*, vol. 2, pp. 798–808, p. 801, pl. 516; Percy E. Schramm, Peter Berghaus, Nikolaus Gussone, *Die deutschen Kaiser und Könige in Bildern ihrer Zeit. 751–1190* (München, 1983), p. 361; p. 83ff.; Ulrich Kuder, "Die Ottonen in der ottonischen Buchmalerei. Identifikation und Ikonographie", in *Herrschaftsrepräsentation im ottonischen Sachsen*, eds. Gerd Althoff, Ernst Schubert VuF 46 (Sigmaringen, 1998), pp. 137–234, p. 190ff.

unspecified time, and it is not genetically linked to the text. The other composition was made for decoration of the Gospel Book (belonging to Otto III or Henry II)<sup>116</sup> and is housed together with the codex in Munich.<sup>117</sup>

Both composition occupy two pages in their codices; the heraldic left was designated for the majestic imaging of the king, typical of the period—the ruler is sitting on the throne in front of the schematically imagined *pallatium*;<sup>118</sup> on both his sides are standing the people who represent the elite of the state: the clergy—archbishops on the heraldic right; the princes on the opposite side. More important for us are the opposite pages. They show four women who are honouring the emperor with a slight bow of their bodies and presenting him with gifts. They all are dressed similarly in richly, long robes. Each is barefooted<sup>119</sup> and the crown-like head cap as well as the inscription above her head saying which country she personifies. The last in the row in both books is *Sclavinia/Sclavania*, but the figures slightly differ from one another with their attributes.<sup>120</sup>

Interestingly, the head of *Sclavinia* in the Munich book is decorated with the crown in the shape of town walls (*corona muraris*), which is often interpreted by scholars as echoing Otto III's visit to Gniezno, which this *insignium* reminded of. Moreover, *Sclavinia* in this imaging offers the emperor the discus of rule, which she is holding in the right hand, whereas she uses the left one—as the only among the four figures!—to greet Otto III sitting on the throne. This gesture cannot have been placed in the miniature accidentally. On the other hand, due to the lack of analogies in other pictures, it is difficult to regard it as deeply meaningful. We can only associate this gesture directly with the reception, full of splendor and acceptance, given out for the emperor in Poland.<sup>121</sup>

<sup>116</sup> Rainer Kahsnitz, "Herrscherbilder der Ottonen", in *Krönungen Könige in Aachen—Geschichte und Mythos*, ed. Mario Kramp, vol. I (Mainz, 2000), pp. 283–293 (Otton III); but: Kuder, "Die Ottonen in der ottonischen", p. 190ff. (Henry II).

<sup>117</sup> Munich, Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4453, fol. 23c/24r—for picture see e.g.: *Europa Mitte um 1000*, vol. 3: *Katalog*, p. 456, pl. no. 22.01.01; or: Schramm, Berghaus, Gussone, *Die deutschen Kaiser*, p. 362f.; Stefan Weinfurter, "Sakralkönigtum und Herrschaftsbegründung um die Jahrtausendwende. Die Kaiser Otto III. und Heinrich II. in ihren Bildern", in *Bilder erzählen Geschichte*, ed. Helmut Altrichter (Freiburg am Breisgau, 1995), pp. 47–103, p. 52ff.

<sup>118</sup> Hans B. Meyer, "Zur symbolik frühmittelalterlicher Majestasbilder", *Das Münster. Zeitschrift für christliche Kunst und Kunstwissenschaft* 14 (1961), 73–88.

<sup>119</sup> *Reallexicon für Antike und Christentum*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1950), pp. 1186–1193 (*Barfußigkeit*).

<sup>120</sup> On a woman as personification of a country see: Nitschke, "Erde in Recht", p. 734f.

<sup>121</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 203 (445); see also: Gerd Althoff, "Symbolische Kommunikation zwischen Piasten und Ottonen", in *Polen und Deutschland*, pp. 163–191, and: Banaszkiwicz, "Otton III jedzie do", pp. 277–315.

As a matter of fact, each of these garments belonging to the described figure could become the subject of a separate analysis, as it certainly was of some meaning—just like the differences in depicting the Slavic land in both codices. This problem, however, very difficult, which requires extensive studies, goes beyond our subjects.

It should only be noticed that the personifications of the Slavic land in both codices do not differ significantly from the figures which imagine other countries: Italy, Germania, and Gaul (*Galia*) in the Bamberg book and in the Munich one: Roma, Gaul, and Germania. In all probability, both complete compositions serve to determine symbolically—and perhaps even as a demand—the range and structure of the emperor's power. Thus the order the women were placed in front of Otto must signify something. Unfortunately, we can only speculate here what it meant and the scope of our interpretations can vary greatly. Yet, in the case of the Slavic land, her outermost location in relation to the emperor's majesty reflects both her young age in terms of civilizational achievements, as well as real peripheral position against the centres of the world of the day. It is noteworthy, that *Sclavinia* is not smaller in size,<sup>122</sup> or she is not singled out from other personifications. Even if this fact does not indicate a carefully thought, intentional declaration of her equal status among other provinces of Otto III's universal *Imperium Christianum* in the making, she certainly expresses such a notion. The Slavs were to be the people co-founding the universal empire, not just the subject of invasion and Christianization.<sup>123</sup>

As a matter of fact, all those interested agree—still arguing about the details or the dating of the image—that the above outlined miniatures of the so called Munich Gospel Book and the Bamberg Codex render major features of the monarch of the empire's political programme in more-or-less 1000 towards those European territories which remained under his control. In the case of Poland, the main point of this concept was—all weighs in favour of it—the elevation of Boleslav Chrobry to the rank of a king, without his resignation from close relations and subordination of the newly founded monarchy to the universal state of Otto III.<sup>124</sup> Perhaps, the Polish ruler was

<sup>122</sup> One should quote the example of the later miniature from the Pericope Book of Henry II (Munich, Bayerische Bibliothek, Clm 4452 fol. 2'), which showed the coronation of the monarch of the Reich and his wife by Christ himself. Below are the women who personify some countries, the three of which were highlighted for their size—Kuder, "Die Ottonen in der", p. 199ff., pl. 18; Weinfurter, "Sakralkönigtum und Herrschaftsbegründung", p. 79.

<sup>123</sup> Michałowski, *Zjazd Gnieźnieński*, p. 229

<sup>124</sup> Fried, *Otto III und Boleslaw*, p. 67ff. passim; see also: Wolfgang Giese, "Venedig-Politik und Imperiums-Idee bei den Ottonen", in *Herrschaft, Kirche, Kultur. Beiträge zur Geschichte*

even supposed to become a sort of representative of the empire in the Slavic world—which explains his future aspirations to rule Bohemia or even Ruthenia.<sup>125</sup> At this stage, however, we are entering the territory remote from the mainstay of our considerations, and very uncertain as there is no evidence or at least analogies from elsewhere in Europe.

Irrespective of the details of Otto III's concept behind Poland, the creation of the archbishopric in Gniezno was the only target on legal grounds that was achieved. The emperor's premature death interrupted the work he had commenced and consequently developed.<sup>126</sup> The emperor's passing away put Boleslav Chrobry in a very awkward position. This was because all the honours and concessions he had received from the emperor had rose the Piast ruler to a very high position in the regional honorary hierarchy. However, this bold plan of a new eastern policy met with strong opposition in Germany. Even the Polish ruler's allies, as this is shown by the example of Brun of Querfurt,<sup>127</sup> did not want to accept it with all its consequences.

The disapproval of Otto III's idea expressed by some, quite influential east-German lords posed a threat to the beneficial alliance with the empire, appreciated by the Piasts. Boleslav did not want to, and probably could not withdraw from his position or try to return to the state of affairs from before the year 1000, resigning from the status of 'lord'. Such a move would have resulted—in the society which followed the rule of 'honor' understood restrictively<sup>128</sup>—in losing prestige, which would have been linked with a great risk of unimaginable consequences to follow.

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*des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Friedrich Prinz zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 37, ed. Georg Jenal (Stuttgart, 1993), pp. 219–243; David A. Warner, "Ideals and action in the reign of Otto III", *Journal of Medieval History* 25 (1999), 1–18.

<sup>125</sup> Jonathan Shepard, "Otto III Boleslav Chrobry and the 'Happening' at Gniezno, A. D. 1000: Some possible implications of professor Poppe's thesis concerning the offspring of Anna Porphyrogenita", in *Byzantium and East Central Europe*, Byzantina et Slavica Cracoviensia 3, eds. Günter Prinzing, M. Salamon, Kraków 2001, pp. 27–48.

<sup>126</sup> More on this chapter 3.3.3 of this book.

<sup>127</sup> Reinhard Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch-politischen Gedankenwelt Bruns von Querfurt*, Mitteldeutsche Forschungen vol. 5 (Münster – Köln, 1956), p. 178ff.; Friedrich Lotter, "Christliche Völkergemeinschaft und Heidenmission. Das Weltbild Bruns von Querfurt", in *Early Christianity in Central and East Europe*, ed. Przemyslaw Urbańczyk (Warszawa, 1997), pp. 163–174; see also: Beumann, "Das Imperium und", p. 32ff.

<sup>128</sup> Martin Dinges, "Die Ehre als Thema der historischen Anthropologie. Bemerkungen zur Wissenschaftsgeschichte und zur Konzeptualisierung", in *Verletzte Ehre. Ehrenkonflikte in Gesellschaften des Mittelalters und der frühen Neuzeit*, eds. Klaus Schneiner, Gerd Schwerhoff (Köln – Weimar – Wien, 1995), pp. 29–62; Herwig Wolfram, *Die Germanen* (München, 2000), p. 20ff.

In all probability the Polish ruler began to play a certain game. He did not show his royal aspirations immediately after 1002, but he tried to maintain and reinforce his high rank, achieved thanks to Otto III. He also thought about the future royal title as a complement to his honours. German reactions to this sort of stance of the Piast will make the content of the consecutive parts of this study. At this stage, however, one more question should be discussed, which has recently been closely linked with the emperor's expedition to Gniezno.

#### 2.1.4 *Origin of the Names: the Poles and Poland*

It is intriguing that just in Boleslav Chrobry's time, around the year 1000, entries appear in written sources where the name of the country of the Piasts and its inhabitants are given in the forms closed to the contemporary ones. Traditionally, authors of historical studies have suggested that it was the hype of the Gniezno events which caused it. According to some historians, originally in Germany, and later in other Western European countries the existence of the Polish state began to be gradually noticed, and consequently the name of the state and its people were used. Their origin was, in those views, native.

Recently, a renowned medieval historian from Germany, Johannes Fried, expressed his opinion on this issue. He rejected the previous explanations of the origin of the names 'Poland' and the 'Poles', in an attempt to replace them with his own idea. The author suggests associating the origin, not only the dissemination of these words with the Gniezno convention.<sup>129</sup> His views did not provoke any heated debate among the Polish mediaevalists,<sup>130</sup> even though the author presents in his brilliant essay some exceptional revelation. The scholar suggests that there was a link between the Apostle phraseology applied in the official monarchical title of Otto III and the etymology of the term 'Poleni', 'Polani' that he proposes. This term derives—on the basis of a simple association of the sound—from the Polish and Slavonic words: 'polać', 'polewać' [pour e.g. water—transl. note].<sup>131</sup>

In consequence, according to this mediaeval historian, the term 'Polska' does not come from the word 'pole' [field—transl. note]—as in a traditional

<sup>129</sup> Johannes Fried, "Der hl. Adalbert und Gnesen", *Archiv für mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 50 (1998), 41–70.

<sup>130</sup> Strzelczyk, *Bolesław Chrobry*, p. 83ff.

<sup>131</sup> Fried, "Der hl. Adalbert und", p. 49.



view,<sup>132</sup> and ‘Polacy’ are not the ‘dwellers of the fields’—as stated in previous opinions. On the contrary, the creation of the name for the inhabitants, as well as the birth of the term to mean the state itself happened as a single act. To be more precise, during the Gniezno convention the emperor appeared as the godfather to the people and the country, and announced these names, because ‘Polacy’—*Poleni, Polani* in Latin texts—are the people poured with holy water, Christians, and the emperor himself, who is making such concessions, is their apostle—namely the organizer of the Church.<sup>133</sup>

The only source used by Fried in his analysis is the 15th century annal,<sup>134</sup> where—admittedly without mentioning Otto III—the names of Poland and Poles were given their etymology in the way which is on a par with the idea of the German mediaeval historian. This is not the end. We are writing here about the expert mediaevalist who put his reasoning in a historical context and grounded on sophisticated theological arguments. The whole essay, tinged with some great literary talent, makes a well-rounded construction. The problem lies in the fact, however, that the German historian, starting with a very simple idea, dresses it in a very abstract body of evidence and—rejecting a very old early mediaeval etymology of the name of the country—proposes his thesis. At the same time he does not allow for the achievements of the Slavonic linguistics or historical studies which for a long time have taken interest in the problem of creating native ethnic names. The analyses by Fried also lack the understanding the source context in the subject of ethnic terminology, or the deconstruction of cultural and anthropological matters which regard the origins and functioning of ethnonyms in traditional societies. All this matters for the problem under discussion. Even if the inception of the terms ‘Polska’ and ‘Polacy’ was the result of a certain donation by the emperor,<sup>135</sup> their acknowledgement by the natives would testify

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<sup>132</sup> See: Jerzy Nalepa, “‘Polska’ pochodzenie i wiek nazwy”, *Język Polski* 74 (1994), 174–182, 241–245; Kersken, *Geschichtsschreibung im Europa*, p. 560ff.

<sup>133</sup> Johannes Fried, which is intriguing, did not notice that the Poles, who were allegedly freshly poured with holy water, lived their second, or perhaps even third generation in a new faith. What is also curious is the logical divergence of his theses: he wrote elsewhere that Otto III had not intended to establish the archbishopric of ‘St. Adalbert’ in Poland, but in Bohemia. If the Brave—as Fried argues—intimidated the emperor into changing his decision, it is difficult to assume that Otto III, as it were improvising, would take a decision within a couple of days to give the name to the country.

<sup>134</sup> *Annales Sandivogii*, MGH SS 29, ed. Max Perlbach (Hannoverae, 1892), pp. 424–965, p. 425.

<sup>135</sup> To spite this idea stands the formula of the emperor’s document issued in Gniezno for the bishop of Vicenza, Hieronymus.: *actum in Sclavania in civitate Gnesni*—see higher note no. 114.

to the fact that the name suited local notions and fulfilled cultural standards which were required from such terms at that time.

Another German scholar, Christian Lübke, well acquainted with the Slavic specificity, was aware of the weakness of Johannes Fried's theory. He attempted to defend the thesis of the mediaeval historian from Frankfurt on Main trying to put it in a broader historical perspective and provide with a proper, Slavic cultural context.<sup>136</sup> In Fried's theory Lübke stressed primarily this part which can associate it with older views of the origin of the name of 'Poland'. That is, even though this author supports the view that it was the verb 'pol/ew/ac' which was the source of the name of the country of Boleslav Chrobry, he pays attention, following Fried's reasoning—but emphasizing the problem more deeply, to an excerpt from the Old Testament, which says that divine grace changes the status of the country together with its name. The soil which experiences such divine intervention becomes 'a fertile land'<sup>137</sup>

In this place these new ideas approach old concepts which derive the name of the country of the Piasts exactly from the field. However, our author does not take up this question. Instead, he suggests his readers something else. He notices that on the 10th century Slavic territory a number of new ethnic names appear. They were all associated with the successful peoples which built durable political structures and defeated their neighbours. Next, the names of these expansive, victorious tribes were extended to the groups of other peoples, which the former subordinated, or these names were imposed on them to complement the conquest, in order to wipe out the ethnic identity of the defeated.

Christian Lübke includes e.g. the term 'Lutycy' [Lutizians—transl. note] among such 'victorious' expressions. In this case, the process of inception and consolidation of this name differed from the above outlined mechanism, because it resulted from the successful uprising of the Elbe Slavs in 983 (emphasized by replacing the older term 'Veleti'). Its proliferation happened thanks to the fact that the adjective 'lutycy' = 'severe, powerful' allegedly expressed satisfaction from defeating enemies.<sup>138</sup> The quoted author observes

<sup>136</sup> Christian Lübke, "Qui sint vel unde huc venerint—Bemerkungen zur Herkunft der Namen von Polen und Liutizen", in *Die Suche nach den*, pp. 279–288.

<sup>137</sup> Lübke, "Qui sint vel", p. 284: Polen', das 'fruchtbare Feld', das 'gesegnete Land', an dem der Herr seine Lust hatte; die terra habitata des Propheten (Is. 62,4), die 'terra habitabilis', 'das bewohnte Land', von dem Hieronymus gesprochen hatte; das unter den Pflug genommene Land inmitten siedlungsabweisender Wälder; das 'getaufte Land', pole, wie es die spätere Legende umschrieb.

<sup>138</sup> See: Lothar Dralle, *Slawen an Havel und Spree* (Berlin, 1981), pp. 148–150.

a similar phenomenon of extending the name of one people to a wider community with regard to the term Rus', and the name of the Czechs.<sup>139</sup>

As far as the Piasts and their people are concerned, Christian Lübke notices that their army subdued relatively quickly, within the more-or-less sixty-years' period, the area similar to the territory of present Poland. It was the name of the society that was created following this successful conquest and later imposed to the defeated which crowned the subjugation and demonstrated the victory.<sup>140</sup>

There is something intriguing in the theory of the German historian. Nevertheless, even a superficial knowledge of it must provoke the question: why would the Piast victorious leaders, unlike their neighbours mentioned by Christian Lübke, have to wait to name their territorial power until Otto III's arrival? After all, their territory had been established more-or-less ten years before the Gniezno convention, and the nucleus of the state, strengthened by a number of strongholds had been established some fifty years before.

This question is important and interesting. We know that names in traditional societies were extremely important. They were regarded as an inherent part of a thing, person, or a phenomenon. In the case of a people, their own name, different from other neighbouring tribes, identified a community, built their integrity, provided them with their own identity and exposed their own features. Thus the appearance of the term 'Polanie' on a massive scale (considering the proportions of information in the extant sources) just in the time of Boleslav Chrobry was something significant, especially when one takes into the consideration the above presented context. From that time on this word consequently supplanted the earlier terms which were applied in German and Western European sources to name the subjects of the Piast rulers.<sup>141</sup> It was also always used by the sources written in Poland.

On the other hand, this sort of circumstance is not that obvious when we consider some other facts. In Bohemia, even in the 12th century, the country's inhabitants were named in written sources not only 'Boemi', but also 'S/c/lavi',<sup>142</sup> while the very name 'Czesi' [the Czechs—transl. note] did

<sup>139</sup> Differently: Adolf Erhart, "Odkud máme jméno. K původu etnonyma Čech", *Slavia. Časopis pro slovanskou filologii* 67 (1998), 289–294; Graus, *Die Nationenbildung der*, p. 162ff., 176f.

<sup>140</sup> See also: Urbańczyk, *Początki państw wczesnośredniowiecznych*, p. 66; similarly: Henryk Samsonowicz, "Podsumowanie tomu", in *Ziemia polskie w X wieku*, p. 455.

<sup>141</sup> And the other: *Wandali*, or *Licikavici*; and the term 'Slavs = Slavi' remained for the pagan Polabians—see: *Helmoldi Presbyteri Bosoviensis*, p. 80 (c. 15), p. 168 (c. 40).

<sup>142</sup> *Monachi Sazaviensis continuatio Cosmae*, ed. Georg H. Pertz, MGH SS. vol. 9 (Hanoverae, 1851), pp. 149–163, p. 155.

not appear in native texts until the 14th century, when it was written in the chronicle by the so called Dalimil.<sup>143</sup>

In the case of the Poles, the early acceptance and usage of their own ethnonym indicates that the Piast elite wanted to highlight its own community and their country. There could have been different reasons for such a stance.<sup>144</sup> The political and cultural context of the day suggests that they may have intended to separate themselves from the Elbe and the Baltic Slavs, who were ethnically very close to the dwellers of Greater Poland,<sup>145</sup> yet still alienated from them by their paganism and cultivation of a republican and oligarchic form of government.<sup>146</sup> Certainly, this sort of separation from the rest of Slavic tribes was important for the Polish community itself, but it was also significant for foreign commentators, especially the Germans. One had to possess a semantic tool to tell the pagan Slavs from Christian Poles, who indeed wanted to politically co-operate with the empire and were therefore interested in their proper perception. The situation sketched here did not necessarily have to be associated with the fully developed and consequently implemented concept of the Piasts, which aimed to promote them and their own country. It is more likely that the Polish elite demonstrated some intuitive faculties which created the stance implying spontaneous, as it seems, actions.

The Latin name of Poland appears in sources around the year 1000 in a couple of accounts simultaneously, and this happened, which is interesting, both in the country of the Piasts and elsewhere. If we consider the older life of St. Adalbert as the text written already before the imperial expedition to Gniezno (999), the term *Palaniorum dux* which appears there and is used to name Boleslav Chrobry should be the oldest word to name the Poles.<sup>147</sup>

<sup>143</sup> Earlier in old slavonic texts—Erhart, “Odkud máme jméno”, p. 292.

<sup>144</sup> Jörg Jarnut, “*Nobilis non vilis, cuius et nomen et genus scitur*”, in ‘*Nomen et gens*’. Zur historischen Aussagekraft frühmittelalterlicher Personennamen, eds. Dieter Geuenich, Wolfgang Haubrichs, Jörg Jarnut (Berlin – New York, 1997), pp. 116–126; see also: *Person und Name. Methodische Probleme bei der Erstellung eines Personennamenbuches des Frühmittelalters*, ed. Dieter Geunich e.a. (Berlin, New York 2002).

<sup>145</sup> Hinc Schuster-Šewc, “Późnosłowiańskie podstawy zespołu lechickiego (ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem języka połabsko-pomorskiego)”, *Slavia Occidentalis* 48/49 (1991/1992), 187–203.

<sup>146</sup> Christian Lübke, “Powstanie i istota związku związku Luciców. Jedna z konsekwencji chrystianizacji Europy Wschodniej w X stuleciu”, in *Chrześcijańskie korzenie. Misjonarze, święci, rycerze zakonni (eseje i szkice)*, ed. Sergiusz Sterna-Wachowiak (Poznań, 1997), pp. 51–64.

<sup>147</sup> S. *Adalberti Pragensis Vita prior*, p. 38 (c. 25), p. 64 (c. 26).

The expressions of this sort that followed and specified—which is important—the people, not the country, appeared before 1009 in the works by Brun of Querfurt. These were the terms: *Polani*,<sup>148</sup> *Poloni*,<sup>149</sup> and *Poloniani*.<sup>150</sup> The form of the third word might be a later distortion of the two previous names, because it is exceptional. These works mentioned here completely lack the name of ‘Poland’. In the works by Brun are only the terms *terra Polanorum*,<sup>151</sup> or *terra Polonorum*.<sup>152</sup>

The phenomenon of the inception of the appellation of the people before the appearance of the name of the country is very well documented by foreign examples. So *Franci* appear long before *Francia* was born.<sup>153</sup> Chroniclers also write *Longobardii*, *regnum Longobardorum*, *Gothii*, *regnum Gothorum*<sup>154</sup> first, and after some time the words *Longobardia*, or *Gotha* begin to be used. In some cases the expression used to mean the ethnos remained the only one. For example, in Italy from the 10th century onwards and next elsewhere the appellations *Theutonici*<sup>155</sup> and *gens Teutonica*<sup>156</sup> were in use to distinguish those inhabitants of present Germany, Austria, and part of Switzerland who spoke Germanic dialects. On the other hand, the name *Teutonia* has never entered practical language and remained a merely poetic term.

We can also observe the preponderance of tribal ethnic appellations and their advantage over the names of countries. This property is well illustrated by the excerpt from the work known as the *Tale of Bygone Years* (*Russian Primary Chronicle*) by an anonymous author describing the territories the Slavs, where the names of countries are not mentioned at all:

Thus some [the Slavs] came and settled by the river Morava, and were named Moravians, while others were called Czechs. Among these same Slavs are included the White Croats, the Serbs, and the Carinthians. [...] the latter came and made their homes by the Vistula, and were then called Lyakhs. Of these same Lyakhs some were called Polyanians, some Lutichians, some

<sup>148</sup> S. Adalberti Pragensis *Vita altera*, p. 8 (c. 10), p. 35 (c. 30).

<sup>149</sup> S. Adalberti Pragensis *Vita altera*, p. 66 (c. 30).

<sup>150</sup> S. Adalberti Pragensis *Vita altera*, p. 50 (c. 10).

<sup>151</sup> S. Adalberti Pragensis *Vita altera*, p. 32 (c. 25).

<sup>152</sup> S. Adalberti Pragensis *Vita altera*, p. 63 (c. 25).

<sup>153</sup> Bernd Schneidmüller, “*Nomen gentis*. Nations- und Namenbildung im karolinischen Europa”, in ‘*Nomen et gens*’, pp. 140–156, p. 148f.; also: Bernd Schneidmüller, ‘*Nomen patriae*’. *Die Entstehung Frankreichs in der politisch-geographischen Terminologie: 10.–13. Jahrhundert* (Sigmaringen, 1987), p. 17ff.

<sup>154</sup> Jarnut, *Nobilis non vilis*, p. 119.

<sup>155</sup> Jarnut, *Nobilis non vilis*, p. 151.

<sup>156</sup> Jarnut, *Nobilis non vilis*, p. 152f.

Mazovians, and still others Pomorians. Certain Slavs settled also on the Dnipro, and were likewise called Polyanians.<sup>157</sup>

In this situation one fact is very intriguing. At a very early stage, more-or-less at the same time when the term *Poleni* was written down in the first life of St. Adalbert and in the works by Brun of Querfurt, the appellation of the country in the form of *Polonia* also appeared.

The oldest example of the Latin expression 'Poland' comes from the message on the coin from the mint which belonged to Boleslav Chrobry. There is an inscription on both sides of the surround of the denar, which says PRINCES POLONIE.<sup>158</sup> There is no doubt that the first word indicates a slightly distorted title of power—*princeps*. This term is usually translated, according to the terminology of the later Middle Ages—but not of our period, as 'duke'.<sup>159</sup>

It is the other part of the inscription—POLONIA, certainly expressing the name of the country, which is particularly intriguing here. Such a form of legend was, apart from the denar described here, unprecedented, and similar appellations do not appear on coins until the 12th century.<sup>160</sup> One could even suspect forgery, but experts have no doubt that it is authentic. According to numismatists, the denar was minted between 1000 and 1010, and the opinion prevails that it happened at the beginning of this period.<sup>161</sup>

Those interested in the problem usually follow Ryszard Kiersnowski's view<sup>162</sup> that the form of the legend of Chrobry's denar originates from inscriptions put on coins produced in Italian Benevento in the first half of the 9th century. This is indicated by the distortion, similar both in Italy and Poland, of the word 'princeps'. Where the letter 'p' is missing at the end of the word. In addition, it is also assumed that there was a connection between

<sup>157</sup> *The Russian Primary Chronicle, Laurentian Text*, transl. and ed. Samuel H. Cross and Olgerd P. Sherbowitz-Wetzor (Cambridge/ MA, 1953), p. 2; *Povest' vremennykh let*, ed. Dmitrij S. Lichačev, vol. 1 (Moskva, 1950), p. 11.

<sup>158</sup> Stanisław Suchodolski, *Początki mennictwa w Europie Środkowej, Wschodniej i Północnej* (Wrocław, 1971); and Stanisław Suchodolski, "Początki rodzimego mennictwa", in *Ziemia polskie w X wieku*, pp. 351–360.

<sup>159</sup> Ryszard Kiersnowski, "Tytuł władcy na stemplach monet średniowiecznych", *Wiadomości Numizmatyczne* (1982), 1–17, p. 9f.

<sup>160</sup> Suchodolski, *Początki mennictwa w*, p. 107; see also: Zdeněk Petrůň, *První české mince* (Praha, 1998).

<sup>161</sup> Suchodolski, *Początki mennictwa w*, p. 107f.

<sup>162</sup> PRINCES BENEVENTI—Kiersnowski, *Pieniądz kruszcowy w Polsce wczesnośredniowiecznej* (Warszawa 1960), p. 273ff.; Ryszard Kiersnowski, *Moneta w kulturze wieków średnich* (Warszawa, 1988), p. 112f., 174; see also: Elisabeth Garms-Cornides, "Die longobardischen Fürstentitel (774–1077)", in: *Intitulatio II: Lateinische*, pp. 341–452, p. 387f.

the Italian money and the denar of Boleslav Chrobry. A closer investigation of the matter, however, proves that these assumptions are pointless. There was only one stamp for the money of duke Sico, who ruled between 817 and 832, which had a shape of the appellation PRINCES identical with the Piast denar.<sup>163</sup> This was the only example among a few similar types of Benevento coins of the 830s<sup>164</sup> which are indicated by numismatists.<sup>165</sup> There is a legend PRINCES BENEVENTI on the obverse in the surround of this coin, and the monogram SICO in the field. The legend on the reverse shows 'A'RCHANGELUS MIHAEL, while in the field the imaging of a cross on a three-step platform was put.

The coin of Boleslav Chrobry looks entirely different. There is the sign of a bird, probably a peacock, which is considered to be a Christological symbol,<sup>166</sup> on the one side; the other side is filled up by the Greek cross, quite neatly shaped.

There is not even the smallest detail of the Piast coin which would have anything to do with its alleged Italian archetype. It is equally unjustified to interpret the title *princeps* as 'duke'. Carolingian sources as well as Ottonian ones show it clearly that those days this term simply indicated a powerful ruler, a monarch—king, sometimes an emperor, and it happened earlier that authentic classic Roman emperors were named in this way.<sup>167</sup>

However, what is the most important for us in the whole issue is the fact that in Poland, even if foreign models were in use—we have no knowledge of this, or following external inspirations, the maker of the stamp—perhaps with the knowledge of the monarch or one of his inner circle—put the name of the country deliberately, instead of transferring a foreign pattern, which in fact was practiced also in the country of the Piasts.<sup>168</sup> This circumstance and awareness of the secondary character of the terminology used to name the

<sup>163</sup> Philip Grierson, Mark Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage with a Catalogue of the Coins in the Fitzwilliam Museum Cambridge*, vol. 1.: *The Early Middle Ages: 5th–10th Centuries* (Cambridge – London – New York, 1986), pp. 66–73; catalogues: pp. 576–579, (*Beneventan coinage*), pl. 51, especially: no. 1105, no. 107.

<sup>164</sup> Suchodolski, *Początki mennictwa w Europie*, p. 107f.

<sup>165</sup> Grierson, Blackburn, *Medieval European Coinage*, p. 577, pl. 51, no. 1106.

<sup>166</sup> Stanisław Suchodolski, "Najdawniejsze monety polskie jako źródło dające poznać dzieje pierwszej monarchii", in *Aetas media—Aetas moderna. Studia ofiarowane profesorowi Henrykowi Samsonowiczowi w siedemdziesiątą rocznicę urodzin*, ed. Agnieszka Bartoszewicz (Warszawa, 2000), pp. 299–312, p. 305.

<sup>167</sup> The Longobard *princeps* used to wear a crown and considered himself to be king: Garms-Cornides, "Die longobardischen Fürstentitel", p. 354ff.

<sup>168</sup> Peter Ilisch, "Regensburg- und Otto-Adelheid-Imitationen aus Polen?", *Wiadomości Numizmatyczne* (1994), 65–70; Suchodolski, "Najdawniejsze monety polskie", p. 303.

land in comparison with the ethnic terms make us suppose that, as a matter of fact, the expression *Polanie* had appeared a few dozens of years before the inception and recording of the term *Polonia*.

On the other hand, it is difficult to associate the legend minted on the denar of Boleslav Chrobry with a deliberate propaganda action. Other coins of the Piast, probably also expressing his royal pride and other, more complex content, especially this which included the special title of *rex*, minted before 1015, or *dux inclitus*<sup>169</sup>—did not possess the name of the country in their legends.

Thus if the name *Poland* appeared on the denar as though casually, this would mean that it was not a novelty, something exceptional—in another case the message it rendered would be incomprehensible, even for its elite recipients.

This speculation is confirmed in the work by Thietmar of Merseburg. The author always used precise terms to name Slavic peoples. The chronicler also showed a number of times his acquaintance with the language of the German's eastern neighbours.<sup>170</sup> All the more, it should be emphasized that in his work appears the term *Polenia*<sup>171</sup> to name the state of the Piasts, while in the case of the subjects of Boleslav Chrobry the expression *Poleni* is used consequently.<sup>172</sup> It is clear that the word 'pole' [field—transl. note], which—let us remember—forms the basis for the oldest explanations of the origin of the country's name, recorded by domestic and foreign accounts.<sup>173</sup>

We are aware of the permanence of memory and solicitous preservation of tradition in old communities.<sup>174</sup> This makes us look attentively at Polish sources which derive the name of the country from the term 'pole'. This sort of interpretation is, after all, deeply justified by the historical and linguistic research carried out by Slavonic scholars with the application of extensive comparative studies. Moreover, it is well grounded in traditional connotations known to us, concerning the springing up of ethnic names, which were created by different peoples for their own use.<sup>175</sup>

<sup>169</sup> Suchodolski, "Początki rodzimego mennisctwa", p. 360ff.

<sup>170</sup> Schröder, *Völker und Herrscher*, p. 33ff.

<sup>171</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 283 (5,23), 329 (6,10), 341 (6,19), 505 (7,25), 609 (V3,22).

<sup>172</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 299 (5,34), 391 (6,55), 495 (7,18), 621 (V3,31).

<sup>173</sup> Nalepa, "Polska' pochodzenie i wiek", p. 181

<sup>174</sup> *Oral Tradition in the Middle Ages*, ed. Wilhelm F. H. Nicolaisen (Binghampton – New York 1995); Michael T. Clanchy, *From memory to written record: England 1066–1307* (London, 1979); Michael Richter, *The oral tradition in the early Middle Ages* (Turnhout, 1994).

<sup>175</sup> Erhart, "Odkud máme jméno", p. 290; Schneidmüller, "Nomen gentis. Nations-", pp. 140–156.



In all probability, the members of a community who began at a certain stage in their development, and certainly a few dozens of years before recording their name, to call themselves ‘the dwellers of the fields’, intended to emphasize that they simply considered themselves to be a civilized people. This name was to demonstrate the conviction that those bearing it inhabit vast, life-giving fields, unlike other communities, which did not possess such fields, or at least not as many as the people of Greater Poland. And in the background some pride probably flickered in their hearts that they could utilize those goods, work the land and harvest its agricultural produce, which is, indeed, the base of every civilization. The abundance of all this has always been perceived as the sign of a special protection of sacral powers, both in pagan and Christian times.<sup>176</sup>

## 2.2 OPINIONS BY BRUN OF QUERFURT AND THIETMAR OF MERSEBURG ON THE POLISH RULER

Interestingly, if we try to look at the image of Boleslav Chrobry created by the sources of his day, it is not his military achievements, so keenly discussed in historical studies and the Polish national mythology, which appear in the foreground.<sup>177</sup> Similarly, when we wonder—putting aside traditional visions by modern historiography—where the most significant accomplishments of the second historic Piast could be identified, we will admit that it was his activity in the field of religion that turned out to be the most long-lasting and momentous. Everybody, even those superficially acquainted with the presentation of the early history of Poland, knows that Boleslav was the real builder of the administrative structure of the Polish Church, which managed to survive the pagan revolt at the close of the 1030s and bound together the Polish state with the civilization of Latin Europe. On the other hand, the

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<sup>176</sup> Cf. the remarks of the author of the so called *Hungarian—Polish Chronicle* on the advantage of the Hungarians over the Poles because of a more agricultural, ‘civilized’ nature of the community of the former—see: *Żywot św. Stefana króla Węgier czyli Kronika węgiersko-polska*, ed. Ryszard Grzesik (Warszawa 2003), p. 70f. (c. 6)—Lat. Version: *Kronika węgiersko-polska*, ed. Stanisław Piłat, MPH, vol. 1 (Lwów, 1864), p. 502 (<http://kpbz.umk.pl/dlibra/doccontent?id=14880-31.10.2010>); see also: *Povest’ vremennykh let*, p. 11—*The Russian Primary Chronicle*, p. 2; and: Jacek Banaszkiewicz, “Königliche Karrieren von Hirten, Gärtnern und Pflügern. Zu einem mittelalterlichen Erzählungsschema vom Erwerb der Königsherrschaft [die Sagen von Johanner Agnus, Přemysl, Ina, Wamba und Dagobert]”, *Saeculum* 33 (1982), 265–286.

<sup>177</sup> The nickname “chrobry”—“the brave” came from the 14th century—Jasiński, *Rodowód pierwszych Piastów*, p. 81.

facts which testify to Boleslav Chrobry's strong personal involvement in religious matters, his deep piety, the support given to the clergy: monks, secular priests, and missionaries, are not equally emphasized. According to this sort of activity, the sources contemporary to Boleslav include such expressions to name the ruler as 'mother of God's servants',<sup>178</sup> or 'source and origin of the holy Catholic and apostolic faith'.<sup>179</sup> Boleslav Chrobry's piety was even noticed by the chronicler Thietmar, exceptionally unfriendly to him.

The problem of an early-mediaeval monarch's religiousness is one of most important questions associated with a broad sphere of ideological legitimization of rule, or even with recognizing the rule as civilized. Therefore, it seems that it will be important to investigate the way of perception and register, and also reactions of German observers to actions and devotional behavior of the Polish monarch, which—probably—were a sort of messages aiming to demonstrate a cultural refinement and Christian maturity of Boleslav Chrobry.

### 2.2.1 *Dei servorum mater—the Guardian of Church and a Helper of Christianization*

Brun of Querfurt—being the only author of the extant texts which contain some information on religiousness of the Piast ruler—had an opportunity to meet him in person. It is not certain how many times and how long this renowned religious activist and missionary stayed in Poland. It is sometimes held that Brun paid his first short visit to the country of the Piasts after 1005.<sup>180</sup> However, his confirmed stay in the country of Boleslav Chrobry did not take

<sup>178</sup> *Dei servorum mater*—S. Adalberti Pragensis episcopo et martyris Vita altera (red. brevior), ed. Jadwiga Karwasińska, MPH, Sn., vol. 4.2 (Warszawa, 1969), pp. 45–69, p. 60 (c. 22); Brun noticed: 'God prepared [Boleslav] as a helper in his [i.e. St. Adalbert's] job'—*Vita Quinque Fratrum Eremitarum [seu] Vita et passio Benedicti et Iohannis sociorumque suorum auctore Brunone Querfurtensi*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasińska, MPH Sn., vol. 4.3, (c. 23), p. 74.

<sup>179</sup> *fons et origo sanctae catholicae et apostolice [...] fidei*—*Codex Mathildis. Liber officiorum cum foliis dedicationis*, Academia Scientiarum et Litterarum Polona. Monumenta sacra Polonorum 1, ed. Brygida Kürbis (Kraków, 2000), p. 139; it is worth emphasizing that the phraseology applied here directly refers to a certain type of a monarch, represented e.g. by the rulers of the Reich of the day, who wanted to see themselves as the apostles of the faith of Christ—Georg Kretschmar, "Der Kaiser tauft. Otto der Große und Slawenmission", in *Bleibendes im Wandel der Kirchengeschichte. Kirchengeschichtliche Studien*, eds. Bernd Noelle, Gerhard Ruhbach (Tübingen, 1973), pp. 102–150.

<sup>180</sup> Jan Tyszkiewicz, "Brunon z Kwerfurtu i jego misje", in *Z dziejów średniowiecznej Europy Środkowo-Wschodniej. Zbiór studiów*, Fasciculi Historici Novi 2, ed. Jan Tyszkiewicz (Warszawa, 1998), pp. 35–48; see also: Heinrich G. Voigt, *Brun von Querfurt. Mönch, Eremit, Erzbischof der Heiden und Märtyrer* (Stuttgart, 1907), pp. 98, 281; Wiszewski, 'Domus Boleslai', pp. 12ff, 22ff.

place until 1008 and in the early 1009.<sup>181</sup> Brun spent most of this time on writing. It was Poland where he probably wrote: the *Life of St. Adalbert* (in a shorter redaction),<sup>182</sup> the *Life of Five Martyred Brothers*,<sup>183</sup> and his famous Letter to Henry II.<sup>184</sup> It is still open to question where and when he wrote another work: the longer version of the *Life of St. Adalbert*, the most extensive of his texts.<sup>185</sup> Some scholars argue this work was written in Poland during Brun's alleged first stay in the country of the Piasts, i.e. before 1006.<sup>186</sup> Others state that he completed it in Germany, or during his missionary activity in Hungary, just around the year 1004.

It is known that Brun based his works on the achievements of the bishop of Prague on the oldest biography of the saint written before 1000 in Rome, as most scholars think, or in one of religious centres in the empire (Aachen, Leodium), as Johannes Fried has proposed in his recent study.<sup>187</sup> Any disputes about the place of writing the oldest *Vitae* of St. Adalbert do not particularly matter for the subject of this monograph, as it does not contain much information on the Polish ruler. It is only limited to two sentences which inform the reader that duke Boleslav looked favourably on bishop Adalbert and his family, and this is why the would-be saint headed to the country of the Piast, so as to use it as the starting point for his mission to pagans.<sup>188</sup> On the other hand, the first life of the bishop of Prague can be used for comparative purposes, in a sort of contrast to the content dedicated to Boleslav Chrobry by Brun.<sup>189</sup>

The missionary from Querfurt devoted the Polish ruler much attention and presented him in a very good light. According to Brun 'God prepared [Boleslav] as a helper in his [i.e. St. Adalbert's] job'.<sup>190</sup> By contrast with the author of the first *Life*, Brun knew the details of St. Adalbert's stay in Poland:

<sup>181</sup> Lotter, "Christliche Völkergemeinschaft und", p. 165.

<sup>182</sup> *S. Adalberti Pragensis* [...] *Vita altera*, (red. brevior), pp. 43–69.

<sup>183</sup> *Vita Quinque Fratrum*.

<sup>184</sup> *Brunonis Querfurtensis Epistola ad Heinricum regem*, ed. Jadwiga Karwasińska, MPH, Sn. t. 4. 3 (Warszawa, 1973), pp. 97–106.

<sup>185</sup> *S. Adalberti Pragensis* [...] *Vita altera* (red. longior), ed. Jadwiga Karwasińska, MPH, Sn., t. 4. 2 (Warszawa, 1969), pp. 3–41.

<sup>186</sup> Jadwiga Karwasińska, "Świadek czasów Chrobrego—Brunon z Kwerfurtu", in *Polska w świecie*, pp. 91–106; Friedrich Lotter, "Brun von Querfurt (Bonifacius)", *LMA* 2, p. 755f.

<sup>187</sup> J. Fried, "Gnesen-Aachen-Rom", pp. 235–279; see: *Vita Adalberti. Früheste*, and rev. by Jerzy Strzelczyk, *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 55 (2006), 116–117.

<sup>188</sup> *S. Adalberti pragensis episcopi et martyris vita prior*, p. 38f., (c. 25–26)—*Vita Adalberti. Früheste*, p. 153f.

<sup>189</sup> Ian Wood, "Wojciech-Adalbert z Pragi i Bruno z Kwerfurtu", in *Tropami Świętego Wojciecha*, pp. 159–168; see also: Wood, *The Missionary Life*, pp. 207ff., 226ff.

<sup>190</sup> *S. Adalberti Vita altera*, p. 28, (c. 23).

he knew that the missionary had sent from this country some envoys to Bohemia asking if they wanted to receive him back there, so that he could complete his appointment there.<sup>191</sup> The bishop of Prague also used the court of Boleslav Chrobry to contact the king of Hungary and his old tutor, Radlo-Atanase.<sup>192</sup> Here, from the perspective of Brun, the Piast ruler turns out to be the protector of political actions taken by the future saint. Besides, Boleslav 'loved' Adalbert and he agreed to his mission for this particular reason that he 'did not dare to defy the noble undertaking'.<sup>193</sup> There are also other details which introduce the country of Boleslav Chrobry to the readers. While describing the bishop of Prague's stay in Gniezno, Brun did not hesitate to mention the magnificence of the town that vaunts the grave of the martyr, which shines with a 'thousand of miracles'.<sup>194</sup>

The natural consequence of this stance was that in another text by the missionary of Querfurt, the *Life of Five Martyred Brothers*,<sup>195</sup> the figure of Boleslav Chrobry had to be much more exposed than in the works mentioned previously. The Piast ruler was the main, next to Otto III, promoter of the activities of the monks who arrived in Greater Poland from Italy in 1000. The author also expounds the correct, Slavonic etymology of the name of the Polish ruler, yet providing it with an addition by a Christian moralist in the form of the phrase 'predominating with his fame'. Since

being the only one among all of our age, he deserved that he sent Adalbert [...] on a mission, and buried the murdered martyr in his state.<sup>196</sup>

It is extremely interesting that Brun ascribes the whole initiative of establishing the congregation of eremites in the country of the Piasts to emperor, Otto III. In his view, it was the monarch who personally, overcoming some difficulties,<sup>197</sup> procured St. Romuald's promise to send to Poland his two favourite disciples—Benedict and John.<sup>198</sup>

Brun even wrote that the emperor himself was going to visit Poland, to meet the previously dispatched monks.<sup>199</sup> It remains unclear what these

<sup>191</sup> *S. Adalberti Vita altera*, p. 28f., (c. 23).

<sup>192</sup> *S. Adalberti Vita altera* (red. brevior), p. 61, (c. 23); see also: Johannes Fried, "St. Adalbert, Ungarn und das Imperium Ottos III.," in *Die ungarische Staatsbildung und Ostmitteleuropa*, wyd. Ferenc Glatz (Budapest, 2002), pp. 113–141, p. 123ff.

<sup>193</sup> *S. Adalberti Vita altera*, p. 29, (c. 24).

<sup>194</sup> *S. Adalberti Vita altera*, p. 29f. (c. 24).

<sup>195</sup> *Vita Quinque Fratrum*.

<sup>196</sup> *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, p. 41 (c. 6).

<sup>197</sup> *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, p. 35 (c. 2).

<sup>198</sup> Michałowski, *Zjazd Gnieźnieński*, p. 340ff.

<sup>199</sup> *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, p. 38 (c. 3).

words were supposed to mean. They were sometimes associated with another message by Brun—recorded also by Peter Damian<sup>200</sup>—that Otto III wanted to resign from his royalty and settle in a monastery. Brun wrote in another place that it was Jerusalem where, in the privacy of a monastery, the emperor wished to spend the rest of his life.<sup>201</sup> However, it is difficult to believe in such reports as we hear that in 1001 the envoys of Otto III were successful in proposing, on behalf of their lord, to the Byzantine princess, and the ship with the emperor's chosen one, arrived in Italy. Unfortunately, at that time the emperor was already dying in his Paterno castle in northern Italy.<sup>202</sup>

Irrespective of the motives, which will probably remain unclear forever, it is a fact that the emperor attached a lot of his attention to the issue of the foundation of a monastery and hermitages in Poland. After all, Otto III presented books and liturgical vessels—objects indispensable for serving God—to the monastic community in the making.<sup>203</sup> This gift was, in fact, more than an ordinary *votum*. It served as a material and symbolic creation of the fundamentals for a religious activity of the *monasterium*. Thus the emperor, according to Brun, together with Boleslav Chrobry, whose land the eremites used to settle down and were supported by him,<sup>204</sup> became, as a matter of fact, the co-founders of the centre. Every benefactor of a monastic community was always held in high esteem; such a person was remembered in prayers, and sometimes even worshipped as a saint.<sup>205</sup> All these devotional circumstances would justify the fact that the emperor got credit for his efforts to establish the hermitage in Poland—the community which Brun identified himself with, being a disciple of St. Romuald. It is curious, however, that Brun completely ignored Boleslav Chrobry's actions in this place.<sup>206</sup> It is known from elsewhere that the Polish ruler himself made efforts to found

<sup>200</sup> *Petri Damiani Vita Beati Romualdi*, ed. Giovanni Tabacco (Roma, 1957), p. 54 (c. 25), p. 66 (c. 30).

<sup>201</sup> *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, p. 38 (c. 2); see also: Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 100, note no. 46.

<sup>202</sup> Strzelczyk, *Otton III*, p. 178ff.

<sup>203</sup> *Missattici paramenta [...] optimi libri—Vita Quinque Fratrum*, p. 65; see: Ekkehard Eickhoff, "Otto III. in Pereum. Konzept und Verwirklichung seiner Missionspolitik", *AfK* 83 (2001), 25–35.

<sup>204</sup> See: Marek Derwich, "Studia nad początkami monastycyzmu na ziemiach polskich. Pierwsze opactwa i ich funkcje", *KH* 57 (2000), 77–105, p. 84f.; also: Jürgen Sydow, "Probleme der camaldulensischen Ostmission", in *Heidenmission und Kreuzungsgedanke in der deutschen Ostpolitik des Mittelalters*, ed. Helmmut Beumann (Darmstadt, 1973), pp. 146–155.

<sup>205</sup> Roman Michałowski, "Święta moc fundatora klasztoru (Niemcy XI–XII wieku)", *KH* 90 (1984), 3–24.

<sup>206</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 184.

in Poland a monastery for eremites of Camaldolense order.<sup>207</sup> This information, admittedly indirect, is included in the text written some time later than the work by Brun of Querfurt, but still credible—the *Life of St. Romuald* by Peter Damian. This work was written only after 1041—late, but one needs to remember that the author was among the disciples of the Italian eremite established by Romuald.

It should be noticed that Damian incorporates in his story a succinct digression that his main character, St. Romuald, once possessed an excellent steed, which had been presented to him by 'the son of the Slavic king Boleslav'.<sup>208</sup> The author added that this young man had joined the monastic community under St. Romuald. This quoted text lacks any extra comments regarding this Slavic monarch; no explanation is given of the reasons and context of his actions. Nevertheless, this information confirms that a direct communication was established between the Polish ruler and the monastic superior of the monks sent to Poland.

Moreover, we learn from Damian that Romuald quickly exchanged the horse for a donkey, which was allegedly more suitable for a monk looking for pious humbleness. This was probably the remark which made some scholars suppose that in fact the horse was intended not for the monk, but for somebody else—Pope Sylvester II was in mind. With this present the Polish duke tried to win the Apostolic See's favour for his royal aspirations. The Chrobry's plans were supposedly changed only in the face of the confusion caused by the anti-emperor's and anti-papal uprising in Rome, which broke out at the turn of 1000 and 1001.<sup>209</sup> However, we will not find any confirmation in sources for such an interpretation. And this sort of explanation hardly reflects the reality. The delivery of a horse to the pope in 1001, and this is—which comes from the logic of the text—the estimated time of the arrival of Boleslav's envoys in Italy, would not have been a problem. After all, he was staying in Ravenna, under the emperor's protection. A splendid gift from the Polish ruler—which the mount indeed was<sup>210</sup>—in the situation when some damage to the pope's authority was done by the rebellion of the

<sup>207</sup> *Petri Damiani Vita*, p. 54f. (c. 26) see also: Stephan Freund, *Studien zur literarischen Wirksamkeit des Petrus Damiani, Anhang: Johannes von Lodi, Vita Petri Damiani*, MGH Studien und Texte 13 (Hannover, 1995).

<sup>208</sup> *Habebat autem* [i.e. Romualdus] *equum satis egregium, quem sibi Busclavi Sclavonici regis filius dederat, factus ab eo monachus—Petri Damiani Vita*, p. 54f. (c. 26).

<sup>209</sup> Teresa Dunin-Wąsowicz, "Koń cenniejszy od złota", *Roczniki Muzeum Narodowego w Warszawie* 26 (1992), 81–88; Eickhoff, *Kaiser Otto III.*, p. 321ff.

<sup>210</sup> Geoffrey Koziol, *Bagging Pardon and Favor. Ritual and Political Order in Early Medieval France* (Ithaca – London, 1992), p. 156.

Romans, would have been very welcomed by Sylvester II. It seems that in this case the speculations depart too much from the source. The very text by Damian clearly links Boleslav Chrobry's gift with the admission of his son to the monastic community, under the patronage of Romuald, and in another place the source reports that the Polish ruler sent a special diplomatic mission to Pereum (Italy) in this matter.<sup>211</sup> At that same time this author did not link this fact with the mention of presenting a horse, which was inserted in another place of his text. Both pieces of information were not somehow precisely put in the chronology of the life. However, the composition of *Vita S. Romualdi* suggests that the presenting of the horse took place in the early 1001, after the emperor besieged Tivoli.<sup>212</sup>

We should also dismiss the assumption that the gift by Chrobry could be something improper for Romuald, which was thought by those who suggested that the mount had been sent to the pope. There is no need to elaborate on this issue. Let us only remember that abbots of the day were usually of aristocratic descent and they often behaved like great lords in their order, and they happened to show ostentatiously their wealth.<sup>213</sup> Even if Boleslav Chrobry perceived Romuald as an ascetic person, the rich present for him was nothing improper. In hagiography we can find a number of examples when saints dismissed riches which they had received from their donors.<sup>214</sup> A gift, even in the form of the most possible luxurious and expensive item, was never anything reprehensible for the eremite who got it. Quite the contrary, it meant his appreciation, and gave him an opportunity to emphasize his fortitude when he rejected the riches he had received.<sup>215</sup>

In general view, Boleslav Chrobry's envoys arrived in Italy when the courtly convention was held at the beginning of April 1001 in the monastery of S. Apollinaire in Clase near Ravenna.<sup>216</sup> There they could have met Romuald, who was taking part in the meeting, or they went with their gifts to nearby Pereum and handed over the duke's plea for sending monks to Poland. In

<sup>211</sup> *Petri Damiani Vita*, p. 61 (c. 28).

<sup>212</sup> Karl and Mathilde Uhlirz, *Jahrbücher des Deutschen Reiches unter Otto II. und Otto III.*, vol. 2: *Otto III. 983–1002* (Berlin, 1954), p. 360f.

<sup>213</sup> See e.g.: *Cosmae Pragensis Chronicon*, p. 121f. (2,27).

<sup>214</sup> E.g.: *S. Adalberti pragensis episcopi et martyris vita prior*, p. 14 (c. 9); or *Thietmar*, p. 453, (6,94): *Multa a Bolizlavo [Chrobry] caeterisque divitibus bona susceptit, quae mox aecclesiis ac familiaribus suis et pauperibus nil sibi retinendo divisit.* (about Bruno of Querfurt).

<sup>215</sup> *S. Adalberti pragensis episcopi et martyris vita prior*, p. 14.

<sup>216</sup> Wolfgang Huschner, "Abt Ödilo von Cluny und Kaiser Otto III. in Italien und in Gnesen (998–1001)", in *Polen und Deutschland*, pp. 111–161, p. 112; *RGSEO*, vol. 3, p. 186, (no. 346).

return for the abbot's consent, they presented him with the steed, and perhaps with some other gifts, and left the young Piast in the monastery.

It is highly surprising why Brun of Querfurt did not write anything about this whole affair. He was a relative and chaplain of Otto III, and simultaneously in 999 (1000?)—1001 a monk in Pereum, who must have been perfectly informed about the circumstances of the origins of the eremites' community, whose member he himself was to become. Let us devote some more room to discuss this question, which is not only interesting, but it also seems important for the understanding of Brun's attitude towards Boleslav Chrobry and the way he perceived the relations of the Piast ruler with the empire.

It looks that the key for the understanding of this part of the story by our author lies outside the *Life of Five Martyred Brothers*, in another work by Brun of Querfurt, entitled the *Letter to King Henry*.<sup>217</sup> This text is thought to have been written in 1008. Its purpose was, first of all, to inform the German ruler and at the same time the formal Church superior of Brun about the missionary activity conducted in Central Europe.<sup>218</sup> As a matter of fact, in addition to this, in a sense, report, the letter contained some complex and important content, as it reached the very ideological foundations of the Christian authority. The work adopted the shape of a message, or a memorandum concerning the essence of the German eastern policy and directed at Henry II.

Brun always formed in his text a strong accusation, sometimes in an oblique way, that the German king broke the rules which a Christian monarch should obey.<sup>219</sup> A deeper, theological interpretation of the phrases included of the letter, which must have been available to the emperor educated in a monastery,<sup>220</sup> allows the readers to understand certain expressions by Brun as an accusation against the monarch of his crossing the border between the world of law and civilization and the sphere of confusion, sin, and darkness,

<sup>217</sup> Brunonis Querfurtensis Epistola, pp. 97–106.

<sup>218</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 126; see also: Lotter, "Christliche Völkergemeinschaft und", p. 165.

<sup>219</sup> Brunonis Querfurtensis Epistola, p. 101f.: *Quae conuentio Christi ad Belial? quae comparatio luci ad tenebras? quo modo conueniunt Zuarasiz diabolus et dux sanctorum, uester et noster Mauritius? qua fronte coeunt sacra lancea et qui pascuntur humano sanguine diabolica uexilla?*—The 'Chronicon', p. 255 (note no. 62): *How do the demon Svarozic and the leader of the saints, your and my Maurice meet? By what consideration do the Holy Lance and the Devil's banner, which is nourished by human blood?*

<sup>220</sup> Manfred Höfer, *Heinrich II. Das Leben und Wirken eines Kaisers* (München, 2002), p. 26f.; Weinfurter, "Der Anspruch Heinrichs II", pp. 124, 131.



where demons were in charge.<sup>221</sup> The king's mistake was highlighted by an allusive reference to some biblical examples and sacred texts, popular at that time. The reason for such drastic opinions formulated by the religious ideologist and missionary in one was his dissatisfaction with the political coalition which from 1003 linked the ruler of Germany with the pagan Lutizi. Brun found this alliance was much more annoying, as it damaged a certain order which had been established thanks to a dozen or so years of rules of consecutive representatives of the Liudolfing dynasty, and it weakened Christianity in Central Europe. The alliance of the empire of the Ottos with the Piast state, directed against the Baltic Slavs whom Henry II supported,<sup>222</sup> was an important element of this order.

A relatively small text, as this letter was, makes a clear and cogent composition. The author wrote it not to let out his own frustration, but with the intention to improve the situation which in his view was extremely harmful for the right order of the world. Thus Brun, in the way only accessible to Henry II, and in the most accusatory parts illegible for his advisors, not only indicated the inappropriateness, but also sinfulness of his conduct. Moreover, the missionary tried to demonstrate on a neutral example what should be the proper stance of a truly Christian monarch. This sort of need produced the description of the Rus' ruler, Vladimir the Great, who with great sacrifice aided Brun in his mission of 1007 (1008?)<sup>223</sup> to the Petchenegs.

There is no doubt that the duke of Kiev indeed supported the mission and helped the evangelizer get to the Black Sea nomads. Brun, however, clearly highlights his achievements. This sort of approach, considering its meaning in the context of the whole text, could serve to contrast a negative, in the author's view, stance of Henry II, who resigned from forcing the Baltic Slavs to adopt Christian religion.<sup>224</sup> Similarly, the author stylized Boleslav Chrobry as a genuinely pious ruler, a supporter of the Church and a protector of

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<sup>221</sup> David A. Warner, *Saints, pagans, war and rulership in Ottonian Germany*, in *Plenitude of Power: The Doctrines and Exercise of Authority in the Middle Ages. Essays in Memory of Robert Louis Benson. (Church, Faith and Culture in the Medieval West)*, eds. Robert C. Figueira, Robert L. Benson (Aldershot, 2006), pp. 11–35.

<sup>222</sup> Warner, "Saints, pagans, war", p. 27ff.

<sup>223</sup> Jan Tyszkiewicz, "Brunon z Querfurtu na Rusi", in *'E scientia et amicitia'. Studia poświęcone Profesorowi Edwardowi Potkowskiemu w sześćdziesięciopięciolatecie urodzin i czterdziestolecie pracy naukowej*, ed. Marcin Drzewiecki (Warszawa-Pułtusk, 1999), pp. 219–227.

<sup>224</sup> Hans-Dietrich Kahl, "*Compellere intrare*". Die Wendenpolitik Bruns von Querfurt im Lichte hochmittelalterlichen Missions- und Völkerechts", in *Heidenmission und Kreuzzugs-gedanke*, pp. 176–274; see also: Friedrich Lotter, "The Crusading Idea and the Conquest of the Region East of the Elbe. The Tenth- and Eleventh- Century Background", in *Medieval Frontier Societies*, pp. 267–306.

missionaries—in this last case his credit was slightly less stressed than that of Vladimir of Kiev.

One has to remember that the characteristics ascribed to Vladimir the Great and Boleslav Chrobry belonged to the fundamental ideological gear of the German monarchs. This is a huge scientific problem which has attracted much attention of consecutive generations of mediaeval historians, who have produced a number of studies analyzing its most detailed aspects.<sup>225</sup> It would be even difficult to attempt to summarize the conclusions of the extensive research carried out on this issue so far. In order to better realize the significance of the myth of the German monarch as a protector of Christians and an evangelizer, suffice it to mention that the coronation *ordo* of the day contained the formulae which obliged the monarch to act by force of arms against pagans and 'bad' Christians.<sup>226</sup> We have to mention here that the ceremonial putting of the crown on the monarch's head, combined with special prayers, took place a couple of times each year. Even though this act was not as prestigious as the first coronation, the *ordo* formulae, which reminded the monarch about his duties, livened up also at that time.<sup>227</sup>

Now we have to return to the question put above, concerning the *Life of Five Brothers*, where the role of Boleslav Chrobry in the establishing of the eremite congregation in Poland was diminished whereas Otto III's actions were highlighted. It seems that this sort of editorial effort aimed to make the most important among the expected readers of the text by Brun, Henry II himself,<sup>228</sup> feel embarrassed and ashamed of the impropriety of his own stance. Perhaps, the author even wanted to induce the German sovereign to equal his predecessor in the sphere then considered to be one of fundamental fields of royal activity.<sup>229</sup> Brun of Querfurt, as his life clearly shows, was deeply idealistic. Therefore his works must be interpreted as part of his religious doings, in terms of his fight for a better world. Our writer, as he himself remarked, considered the German king as the head of the worldly

<sup>225</sup> Konrad Hoffmann, *Taufsymbolik im mittelalterlichen Herrscherbild* (Düsseldorf, 1968); Howard L. Adelson, "The Holy Lance and the Hereditary German Monarchy", *The Art Bulletin* 48 (1966), 177–192, p. 177; Staats, *Theologie der Reichskrone*, p. 131ff.

<sup>226</sup> *Widukind*, p. 88 (II I).

<sup>227</sup> S. Weinfurter, "Idee und Funktion", p. 100ff.; Reitemeier, *Die christliche Legitimation*, p. 155ff. passim.; see also: Therese Bruggeisser-Lanker, "Krönungsritus und das sakrale Herrschertum: Zeremonie und Symbolik", in *Riten, Gesten, Zeremonien*, pp. 289–319.

<sup>228</sup> Lotter, "Christliche Völkergemeinschaft und", p. 172f.; Warner, "Saints, pagans, war", p. 23ff.

<sup>229</sup> Henry II ostentatiously showed respect for his predecessor: Ludger Körntgen, "*In primis Herimanni ducis assensu*. Zur Funktion von D H II. 34 im Konflikt zwischen Heinrich II. und Hermann von Schwaben", *FMS* 34 (2000), 159–185, p. 183, note 111.

*universum*.<sup>230</sup> It was also the monarch whom the missionary perceived as his major religious superior.<sup>231</sup> Thus one should not be surprised that Henry II was supposed to be the most important reader of his whole literary production. For this reason his works were very much committed not only religiously, but also politically. Having considered this, it is also sensible to look at all of the texts by the missionary of Querfurt comprehensively, searching for the topics which run through each of his works.

This specific ‘dialogue with the dumb’—after all there was probably no answer from the king (at least we have not heard of it), was manifested in the above mentioned *Letter to Henry II*. It is noteworthy that Brun did not limit himself to reprimanding the German monarch and presenting him some examples of good (in his view) conduct. The author also gave Henry II the idea of establishing good relations between the empire and Poland and warned him against God’s wrath because of his continuous ‘persecution’ of Christians together with pagans, if the king rejected his proposal.<sup>232</sup> As a matter of fact this idea boiled down to the return to the alliance between Germany and Poland from before the year 1002. However, the argument presented by Brun, seasoned with the suggestion of some benefits awaiting Henry, is so interesting that it merits further consideration. The missionary, as if having a conversation with the king, admitted at the very beginning of his sequence:

If somebody [...] said that I treat this duke [Boleslav Chrobry] with loyalty and friendship, this, I admit, is true. Indeed, I love him as much as my soul and more than my life.<sup>233</sup>

But, anticipating the accusation of treason, Brun added that this is not against Henry, as he would like the German and Polish monarchs to live in peace and co-operate. At the same time, other expressions included in the letter stressed the author’s loyalty towards the German king and praised him

<sup>230</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 108.

<sup>231</sup> Tyszkiewicz, “Brunon z Kwerfurtu i”, pp. 35–48; Władysław Duczko, “Real and Imaginary Contributions of Poland and Rus to the Conversion of Sweden”, in *Early Christianity in Central*, pp. 129–135; see also: Odilo Engels, “Mission und Friede an der Reichgrenze im Hochmittelalter”, in *Aus Kirche und Reich, Festschrift für Friedrich Kempf*, ed. Hubert Mordek (Sigmaringen, 1983), pp. 203–212; Angenendt, *Kaiserherrschaft und Königstaufe*, pp. 11ff., 310ff.

<sup>232</sup> *Brunonis Querfurtensis Epistola*, p. 102f.

<sup>233</sup> *Brunonis Querfurtensis Epistola*, p. 101: *Si quis etiam hoc dixerit, quia huic seniori fidelitatem, et maiorem amicitiam porto, hoc uerum est: certe diligo eum ut animam meam, et plus quam uitam meam.*

as the legitimate lord of the whole Christian world.<sup>234</sup> The Polish ruler was perceived as his natural vassal and helper in armed actions taken to convert Baltic Slavs.<sup>235</sup>

Thus with Boleslav Chrobry in mind, Brun addressed the German monarch:

Would it not be better to receive loyalty from the man who could aid and advise you how to get a tribute and make a pagan people sacred and Christian in the most possible way?<sup>236</sup>

And he continued, intensifying his appeal:

... your majesty, if you leave Christians in peace so as to fight against pagans for the benefit of Christianity, you will be satisfied when the judgment day comes [...]. The king has no reason to worry that a pious man, mindful of injustice done to him, may ally with pagans. This Boleslav, unlike our king thinks, assures you of his eternal loyalty and that he will ardently support you in your fight against pagans, and eagerly serve you in everything. Oh, what great benefits would be reaped for the protection of Christianity and conversion of pagans, if Boleslav, just like [his] father, Mieszko, with the late emperor, could live with you, our king, who has remained the world's only hope.<sup>237</sup>

There is also a tone of threat in our author's message:

Beware, your majesty, if you want to do everything by force, never with mercy, which Boleslav likes...<sup>238</sup>

And in his reference to Henry's unfavourable military expeditions to Poland, Brun asked rhetorically:

Didn't St. Peter, whose vassal [the Polish ruler] claims to be, and St. Adalbert the martyr speak as [his] defenders?<sup>239</sup>

<sup>234</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 155.

<sup>235</sup> Carl Erdmann, *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens* (Darmstadt, 1980), p. 97ff.

<sup>236</sup> *Brunonis Querfurtensis Epistola*, p. 102: *Nonne melius esset talem hominem habere fidelem, cuius auxilio et consilio tributum accipere, et sacrum, christianissimum facere de populo pagano posses?*

<sup>237</sup> *Brunonis Querfurtensis Epistola*, p. 104ff.; see commentary of the older German historiography: Claude, *Geschichte des Erzbistums*, p. 252ff.

<sup>238</sup> *Brunonis Querfurtensis Epistola*, p. 102.

<sup>239</sup> *Brunonis Querfurtensis Epistola*, p. 103; see also: *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, p. 69f., (c. 16, 17); more about the issue: František Graus, "Der Heilige als Schlachtehelfer—Zur Nationalisierung einer Wundererzählung in der mittelalterlichen Chronistik", in *Festschrift für Helmut Beumann zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Kurt-Ulrich Jäschke, Reinhard Wenskus (Sigmaringen, 1977), pp. 330–348.

The major features of Brun of Querfurt's views of the role of Poland in a certain ideological and political system constructed by the missionary would come down to the idea that the country of the Piasts would form the centre of the mission originating in Germany to pagan peoples of Central and Northern Europe, and Boleslav Chrobry would be a helper in this effort. All the actions would be formally acknowledged by the pope and receive his blessing.<sup>240</sup> However, there was no room in Brun's vision for a political power of the bishops of Rome. In this place his views are explicitly on a par with the ideas expressed by Otto III himself, who did not recognize the secular authority of the pope.<sup>241</sup> On the other hand, the missionary sharply opposed the emperor's concepts aiming to make the capital of Italy the centre of *Imperium Christianum*, as well as the intentions to subordinate the papacy to the secular authority and all the ideas of reactivating the ideas of the ancient empire. In his opinion, it was out of the question that the political centre of Christian Europe should be located in Germany.<sup>242</sup>

The stance of Brun of Querfurt outlined here was of great importance for his perception of the place of the state of the Piasts within the system of power in Europe. In his consistent denial of the attempts to move the centre of gravity of the empire to the south, Brun did not approve of the weakening of the ruler's presence on the north and diminishing of the political importance of Germany within the framework of *Imperium Christianum*, under construction from the day of Otto III.<sup>243</sup> What may seem to be surprising is the fact that the missionary of Querfurt protested against the establishing of the archbishopric of Gniezno and, in a sense, downgrading the position of the archbishopric of Magdeburg, previously the only such institution in Central Europe.<sup>244</sup>

The above outlined problem was once noticed by Reinhard Wenskus. Even though part of his argument is now dated and some other has never been correctly formulated,<sup>245</sup> his major conclusions (no information in the work by Brun concerning the Gniezno convention, archbishop Gaudentius, or his bishops) can only be interpreted as Brun's reluctance to accept the emperor's

<sup>240</sup> Anzelm Weiss, "Pozwolenie na głoszenie Ewangelii (licentia apostolica ad missionem) w czasach św. Wojciecha", *Universitas Gedanensis* 9 (1997), 61–71.

<sup>241</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 103ff.; see: Hartmut Hoffmann, "Ottonische Fragen IV: Otto III. und die Konstantinische Schenkung", *DA* 51 (1995), 53–82.

<sup>242</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 108, 115 *passim*.

<sup>243</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 115ff. *passim*.

<sup>244</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 182ff.

<sup>245</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, pp. 190, 194ff. The theses on Bruno's political naivety are highly ahistorical, and an alleged disinterestedness of the war—very doubtful.

decisions.<sup>246</sup> All this did not prevent Brun from remaining an ideological successor to Otto III's missionary policy and—as it has already been remarked—the advocate of a far reaching political co-operation between the German king and his vassal, the Piast ruler.

At this stage the question must be raised about the difference between Brun of Querfurt, sometimes considered to be Polonophile,<sup>247</sup> and chronicler Thietmar (in fact the missionary's relative),<sup>248</sup> who has been traditionally and rightly regarded by historians as a fervent opponent of Boleslav Chrobry, in terms of their perception of a political position of Poland. This question can be answered in a few ways. The easiest is to compare the two presentations of the Polish rulers as provided by the two authors. The Saxon chronicler will be devoted another part of this work. As for the missionary, one has to mention a few important features of the literary portrait of Boleslav Chrobry he wrote.

Apart from the Piast ruler's dedication to the cause of the mission, he also, according to Brun, was characterized by his 'exceptional courtesy' in his reception of 'God's servant', St. Adalbert,—there is no doubt that in fact the Saxon missionary rendered also—or, perhaps, first of all—his own impression.<sup>249</sup> It is also important that Brun thought that:

nobody mourned for [Otto III] after his death more than Boleslav, whom the underage king had in vain tried to do a lot of good before others, because he had received St. Benedict and St. John at his court.<sup>250</sup>

These words, if we remember that mercy, compassion, and humbleness were regarded by intellectual milieu of the day as an intrinsic element of the personality of the ruler and in general a civilized person,<sup>251</sup> are very meaningful.

These are also augmented by Brun's remarks that Chrobry is 'decent'<sup>252</sup> and he 'likes mercy'. This latter feature was in fact shown in practice. There is a mention in the *Life of Five Brothers* that the Polish ruler ordered not to kill the captured murderers of the eremites, but only to incarcerate them. Later on the victims themselves, who appeared alive, allegedly begged for releasing

<sup>246</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 179f.

<sup>247</sup> Karwasińska, "Świadek czasów Chrobrego", pp. 91–105, p. 101ff.; also: Brygida Kürbis, *Na progach historii*, vol. 2, pp. 163–180.

<sup>248</sup> Friedrich Lotter, "Brun von Querfurt", *LMA* vol. 2, pp. 755–756.

<sup>249</sup> *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, p. 41f., (c. VI).

<sup>250</sup> *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, p. 48, (c. 8).

<sup>251</sup> Fraesdorff, *Der barbarischen Norden*, p. 126ff. *passim*.

<sup>252</sup> *Brunonis Querfurtensis Epistola*, p. 102.

their torturers from chains.<sup>253</sup> it is easy to notice in this passage of the text by Brun the occurrence of some analogies to the model of the Cluniac religious conduct—the most fashionable pattern of devotion among the Western elites of the day.<sup>254</sup> Its good example in our region of Europe would be the life of St. Wenceslaus. It was him who allegedly destroyed gallows and knocked down prisons.<sup>255</sup> It is clearly visible that the missionary of Querfurt presented his readers, especially the most important among them—Henry II, the person of Boleslav Chrobry as a suitable partner of the empire, desired not only for political reasons, but also attractive because of his manners.

This partner would be positioned highly in the hierarchy of power in the region—Brun favours Boleslav with an honourable title of *senior*.<sup>256</sup> In the chronicler's view, he would possess his own independent territorial power—the missionary clearly separates the Piast state from Germany,<sup>257</sup> and his own people, with their respected national and language identity.<sup>258</sup> This is not the end—the Piast ruler was to be deeply engaged in the political system of the empire with the German monarch as an unquestionable leader, as he received his position from the Creator himself.<sup>259</sup>

### 2.2.2 Dux infaustus—*an Evil Ruler and a False Christian*

Thietmar in his work devoted relatively much space to the description of Boleslav Chrobry's personal behavior. He was the only ruler, apart from the German monarchs, who attracted attention of the bishop of Merseburg on such a large scale. Of course, this phenomenon resulted from the chronicler's natural interest taken in long-lasting fights of Henry II against the Polish duke. Nevertheless, the chronicler's remarks do not concern only the military sphere. Quite the contrary, they regard a number of other aspects of the Piast ruler's activity. Although Thietmar's mentions are not complete or numerous enough to serve as the basis for the creation of Boleslav Chrobry's

<sup>253</sup> *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, p. 76, (c. 25).

<sup>254</sup> Huschner, "Abt Odilo von Cluny", p. 111ff.

<sup>255</sup> *Legenda Christiani*, p. 56f.; also: *Passio S. Wenceslai incipiens verbis Crescente fide christiana, Recensio bavarica*, ed. Josef Emler, *Fontes rerum bohemicarum* 1 (Pragae, 1873), pp. 183–190, p. 184; about the Cluniac religious of the layperson of the time: Josef Staber, "Die älteste Lebensbeschreibung des Fürstenn Wenzeslaus und ihr Ursprungsort Regensburg", in *Das heidnische und christliche*, pp. 183–193, p. 190f.

<sup>256</sup> See: Fried, *Otto III und Boleslaw Chrobry*, p. 77f.

<sup>257</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 127.

<sup>258</sup> *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, p. 41.

<sup>259</sup> Lotter, "Christliche Völkergemeinschaft und", pp. 163–174; Warner, "Saints, pagans, war", pp. 11–35.

personality portrait, they are substantial enough for us to make an attempt to find out what world view stood behind the image of the Polish monarch preserved in the chronicle.

Firstly, let us deal with the problem of the presentation of the person, the record and judgment Thietmar made of Boleslav Chrobry's behavior in the secular sphere. Next we shall ponder religious matters. We can notice some acerbity of the author's comments already at the beginning of his account. Explaining the etymology of the name 'Boleslav' as 'more famous', Thietmar remarks right away that the Polish ruler does not bear his appellation thanks to his achievements, but only because this is the established meaning of this name.<sup>260</sup> Even though this comment looks neutral, it is widely held that it was common tradition among mediaeval historians to emphasize the accomplishments of rulers and stress fame they led to, as long as authors valued the monarchs under consideration.

Other mentions by Thietmar show even more antipathy towards Chrobry which author wanted to share with his readers. In the passage that ended the sequence devoted to Boleslav's mother, Dobrawa, the chronicler remarked that this noble, in his view, woman had given birth to 'the perpetrator of the doom of many mothers'—the one who showed his first anger to her, which *he had hidden until the time came, [when] he raged against his family*.<sup>261</sup> The bishop of Merseburg got lost a little in his description of the situation—or confused the facts purposefully—and mixed up Boleslav's mother, who died in 977 when her son was about 10 years old, with Oda, his stepmother, whom Chrobry expelled from the country together with her sons and his stepbrothers after the death of Mieszko I (992). The reader was supposed to be filled with disgust by the chronicler's mention that Boleslav had rejoiced in the death of Ekkehard (1002).<sup>262</sup> This negative feeling was augmented by Thietmar's emphasis put on great bravery of the margrave in the face of the superior strength of the enemy. The author also added that Boleslav had formed the pact of *amicitia* with the lord of Meissen, which obliged both parties to show solidarity and provide mutual aid.<sup>263</sup>

The historiographer's accusations against the Piast concerning his lack of loyalty,<sup>264</sup> deceitfulness and ability to delude others,<sup>265</sup> breaking promises,<sup>266</sup>

<sup>260</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 203 (4, 45).

<sup>261</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 222ff. (4,56).

<sup>262</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 258f. (5,9).

<sup>263</sup> More on this chapters 2.1.2 and 2.3.3. of this book.

<sup>264</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 260 (5,10), p. 261, 263ff., 447 (6,92), 541 (7,51).

<sup>265</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 479 (7,10), 303 (5,37), 331 (6,11).

<sup>266</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 511 (7,29).



insidiousness,<sup>267</sup> or even criminal nature<sup>268</sup> re-occur like a chorus after almost every paragraph of the work by Thietmar in which Boleslav played a role. They are so numerous that there is no point in listing them all.<sup>269</sup> It seems, however, that they made sense in the intellectual construction formed by the chronicler as a means to justify the military efforts the German king made in order to restrain Boleslav. The negative image of the Polish ruler justified to a point the alliance of the German king with the pagan Liutizians, which was difficult to accept even by the chronicler.

At the beginning of his sequence concerning struggles against the Polish duke Thietmar, according to the principles of the so called just war, wants his main character in the story, Henry II, to make a proposal of an amicable settlement of the dispute.<sup>270</sup> The king does not begin his fight until the Piast duke rejects his offer. Thus in the year 1004

because of his own madness and also at the instigation of Margrave Henry [of Schweinfurt] Boleslav attacked the Bavarians and all of his [i.e. Henry] countrymen,<sup>271</sup>

the ruler strikes

to restrain the savagery of that arrogant Boleslav.<sup>272</sup>

After the battle ends successfully Thietmar did not hesitate to add:

had divine love not inspired the King and inflamed the other's arrogance, we would not have won this happy victory so readily.<sup>273</sup>

We also read that whenever an armed clash took place, Boleslav always fled in face of the army commanded by Henry II.<sup>274</sup> Such remarks look peculiar when compared with complaints occurring in other parts of the chronicle about the losses in the German army. There Chrobry was called 'our persecutor'.<sup>275</sup> While writing these words, Thietmar must have been shattering his nerves, which disrupted the logic of his presentation. However, we can find in the work by the bishop of Merseburg some examples of deliberately negative

<sup>267</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 191 (5,29), 499 (7,21).

<sup>268</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 284 (5,23), 285, 331 (6,11), 621f. (V3,32).

<sup>269</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 447 (6,92), 479 (7,10), 541 (7,51).

<sup>270</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 293ff. (5,31).

<sup>271</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 237 (6,2).

<sup>272</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 244 (6,10).

<sup>273</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 245 (6,10).

<sup>274</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 495 (7,19); 499 (7,22). The only skirmish which ended in the defeat of the German army took place in the emperor's absence, p. 499 (7,22).

<sup>275</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 571 (7,72).

description of the Polish ruler's conduct, or even comments humiliating his lordly status. On the other hand, quite unexpectedly, one can encounter mentions in the text of his high moral values.

A few times Boleslav was recorded in the chronicle as the one who was watching the battle from a safe place while his warriors were fighting,<sup>276</sup> or—what was worse—he was feasting while his people were struggling with the enemy.<sup>277</sup> The chronicler did not annotate his accounts with a commentary which would accuse the Polish ruler of, for example, indolence or cowardice, but it seems that this sort of references are topical rather than simply reporting. We are hindered in our interpretation by the lack of knowledge of exact or even similar analogies to the behavior ascribed to Chrobry by Thietmar. The only element of the stories told by the chronicles, which can help us understand their meaning is, admittedly not mentioned by our author, but obvious at every feast, the table. The bishop of Merseburg himself gives us, in another part of his work, a good example of a social understanding of this piece of furniture in his day. Here delicately reproves Otto III for introducing the custom of sitting by his own table which was situated higher than the other tables of those feasting.<sup>278</sup> By doing so, the emperor separated himself from his subject and stressed his own high position, which was probably inspired by the Byzantine courtly etiquette.

The doubts concerning this sort of behavior recorded by Thietmar resulted from the fact that the emperor had broken old Germanic tradition—also shared, after all, by the Slavs,<sup>279</sup> which required that the ruler, or commander should stay among his warriors during war and peace. During a feast the leader took his place at the head of the common table. This place was the most enviable, but the ruler, reserving it for himself, only emphasized his position of the first among the equal. He did not mean to be the monarch condescending to others and separating himself from his subjects by his own, detached table—just like Otto III did, which very much displeased the

<sup>276</sup> Thietmar, p. 395f. (6,58), p. 423 (6,80).

<sup>277</sup> Thietmar, p. 329 (6,10), p. 423 (6,80).

<sup>278</sup> Thietmar, p. 217 (4,47)—see: Heinrich von Fichtenau, *Lebensordnungen des 10. Jahrhunderts. Studien über Denkart und Existenz im einstigen Karolingerreich*, Monographien zur Geschichte des Mittelalters 30, vol. 1, (Stuttgart, 1984), p. 44ff. passim; Karl Hauck, "Rituelle Speisegemeinschaft im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert", *Studium Generale* 3 (1959), pp. 611–621.

<sup>279</sup> Gerd Althoff, "Der friedens-, bündnis-, und gemeinschaftstiftende Charakter des Mahles im früheren Mittelalter", in *Essen und Trinken im Mittelalter und Neuzeit*, eds. Irmgard Bitsch, Trude Ehlert, Xenja von Ertzdorff, Rudolf Schulz (Sigmaringen, 1987), pp. 13–25; Jacek Banaszkiewicz, "Trzy razy uczta", in *Spoleczeństwo Polski średniowiecznej* 5, ed. Stefan K. Kuczyński (Warszawa 1992), pp. 95–108; *Povest' vremennych let*, p. 153ff. (*The Russian Primary Chronicle*).

Saxons.<sup>280</sup> It has to be added here that shared feasting of the day cemented the unity of the political elite of the state and manifested it outside.<sup>281</sup> Thus in a sense this was the act which contributed to the unification of society.

Therefore, the references made by Thietmar to Boleslav's 'egoistic' feasts, apparently neutral and casual, aimed to convince his readers to think of the Piast in the most critical way, and to perceive him as a haughty man who insolently condescended to his inner circle. The description of behavior that Thietmar ascribed to Boleslav Chrobry has also another interesting property. The information that the ruler feasted while his warriors were engaged in combat indicates that the Piast did not only separate himself from his own people, but was also unable to comprehend the natural order of things. As a matter of fact, the words by the bishop of Merseburg signified a very strong undermining of his ability to be the leader of his people. Even though we lack any ready-made, suitable analogies—the description of the alleged behavior of Chrobry is really exceptional—there are a few well documented opinions concerning the meaning of the royal feast, which justify our interpretation. First of all, there is a conviction which runs through literature of the times under consideration that the table belonging to the leader of a community should be accessible to all his people. This very old and widespread belief was put into practice. When a monarch feasted in his palace with his aristocrats, tables were set up in the courtyard of his residence for his other subjects of lower ranks, including the commoners.<sup>282</sup> The behavior which Thietmar ascribed to Chrobry reveals the features of an illegitimate ruler who breaks time-honoured customs and prevents his own people from the access to his table. And this is not the end.

We know that feasting, or dining in general, was usually linked with the time of peace rather than war. Typically, the time of having a meal was the domain of resting and indolence, associated with women.<sup>283</sup> Therefore,

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<sup>280</sup> Gerd Althof, "Das Bett des Königs in Magdeburg. Thietmar II, 28", in *Festschrift für Berent Schwineköper zu seinem siebzigsten Geburtstag*, eds. Helmut Maurer, Hans Patze (Sigmaringen, 1982), pp. 141–153.

<sup>281</sup> Johannes Laudage, "Hausrecht und Thronfolge. Überlegungen zur Königserhebung Ottos des Großen und zu den Aufständen Thankmars, Heinrichs und Liudolfs", *Historisches Jahrbuch* 112 (1992), 23–71.

<sup>282</sup> Hans Joachim Berbig, "Zur rechtlichen Relevanz von Ritus und Zeremoniell im römisch-deutschen Imperium," *Zeitschrift für Kirchengeschichte* 92 (1981), 204–249, p. 216; Alois Niederstätter, "Königseintritt und -gastung in der spätmittelalterlichen Reichsstadt", in *Feste und Feiern*, pp. 491–500.

<sup>283</sup> Georges Dumézil, *Les Dieux des Germains* (Paris, 1959), p. 31ff.; Caroline W. Bynum, *The Religious Significance of Food to Medieval Women* (Berkeley – Los Angeles – London, 1988), p. 73ff.; Banaszkiwicz, "Trzy razy uczta", p. 95ff.

the account by Thietmar works as a big taunt which justifies his accusations of Boleslav's cowardice.<sup>284</sup> On the basis of the chronicler's words the Polish monarch could also be blamed that he could not separate the time of feasting—typical of the period of peace—from war during which a real brawler should only think about defeating his enemy, not providing comfort for his body. Exploring this problem further on, it would be easy to interpret this quoted passage of the work by Thietmar as an attempt to totally discredit Boleslav's ruling skills. After all, the described behavior of the Piast did not comply with commonly accepted norms and natural order of things. Quite the contrary, it belonged to the order of chaos—contradicting the civilization for which, according to our author, Henry II was the representative and head. On a par of with this poetry and symbolic sphere Boleslav Chrobry was compared by the chronicler to

the roaring lion, with his tail following,<sup>285</sup>

which is certainly an allusion to the expression to name the Devil as seen in the Old Testament.<sup>286</sup> Of similar tone is the comparison made between the Polish duke and the *venomous serpent*,<sup>287</sup> or the *cunning fox*.<sup>288</sup>

A good example of how the symbols of lion and serpent were understood can be taken from the miniature of the book dating from the second half of the 10th century, which is today housed in the monastery of Einsiedeln (northern Switzerland, historic Swabia).<sup>289</sup> There is a composition on one page of this work which could be considered as an exact illustration of the above presented comparisons made by Thietmar. The scene shows Christ in majesty who is treading with his right foot on a huge serpent, while with the left one—on a lion. Moreover, Son of God is blessing a pious couple who

<sup>284</sup> Thietmar, p. 511, (7,29).

<sup>285</sup> *leo rugiens cauda subsequent*—Thietmar, p. 329 (6,10); *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 244; a symbolic meaning of the lion: Michael Pastoureau, *Une histoire symbolique du Moyen Âge occidental* (Paris, 2004), p. 47ff.; also: *The Mark of the Beast. The Medieval Bestiary in Art, Life, and Literature*, ed. Debra Hassig (New York - London, 1999)—acc. to the index. In the Bible the lion = the beast: Ps. 22,22/57,5/ 91,3/ 1P 5,8/; see also: *Medieval Iconography. A Research Guide*, eds. John B. Friedman, Jessica M. Wegmann (New York - London, 1998), p. 281f.

<sup>286</sup> *Biblia Sacra Vulgatae Editionis: Sixti V pontificis maximi iussu recognita et Clementis VIII auctoritate edita*, ed. Alberto Colunga, Laurenti Turrado (Madrid - Milano, 1999), p. 466: Ps. 21 (22), 22/ p. 498, Ps 57 (56).

<sup>287</sup> *serpens venenosus*—Thietmar, p. 331 (6,12); in the Corvei version, 153ff., p. 155 (5,10); *The Mark of the Beast* ('snake' or 'serpent'—acc. to the index); *venenatus coluber* (*the venomous viper*)—see also: Hoffmann, *Mönchskönig und 'rex'*, p. 153ff.; and: *Medieval Iconography. A Research*, p. 284.

<sup>288</sup> *Medieval Iconography. A Research*, p. 277f.

<sup>289</sup> *Otto der Große*, vol. 1, p. 473, pl. 9.

are standing by his side. The laypeople, adoring the king of kings, are also joining Christ in his action of treading on the animals—symbols of evil. The man's leg, placed on the right heraldic side of the composition is treading on the serpent, while his wife's foot—on the lion.<sup>290</sup>

The chronicler was quite consistent in his approach to the description of Boleslav, as we can find in his work also the excerpts where the Piast is almost praised. One could even notice some objectivity in such observations by the bishop of Merseburg. It seems, however, that the story simply lost cohesion while being written and its author let his thoughts take their own course. Certainly, of great importance was the outlook of life of the bishop and moralist. From the view of a modern historian this sort of quality is a significantly positive feature of Thietmar's workshop.

Let us take a look at a few examples of such a tendency adopted by our author. This problem is probably best illustrated by one of the episodes in the wars of Boleslav Chrobry against Henry II. In the year 1015 part of the German army retreating from Poland was defeated somewhere on the borderland between the Lower Silesia and Lusatia. A number of great Saxon warriors and a few counts were killed in combat. In consequence the emperor ordered the bishop of Meissen, Eid, to return to the battlefield and bury the dead knights, while the bodies of the aristocrats were to be transported to Germany. The bishop of Meissen was very well received by the victorious Piast, who let him celebrate a Mass and ordered his people to assist in funeral arrangements.<sup>291</sup> In his account of the events Thietmar did not resign from his aversion. Indeed, he remarked that Eid had seen 'Boleslav as he was rejoicing in our defeat'.<sup>292</sup> In his description of another skirmish the bishop mentioned that Boleslav had felt pricks of conscience due to the deaths of some Saxon warriors.<sup>293</sup> In another part of his text the chronicler quoted the words of the Polish ruler who allegedly shuddered at the thought of waging one more war after Henry II's envoys had declared war.<sup>294</sup>

These differences in the opinions expressed by Thietmar may have resulted from the fact that the chronicle was written for a long time and in stages—thus naturally in this case changeable mood of the author and his changing

<sup>290</sup> *Biblia Sacra Vulgatae*, p. 531: *Super aspidem et basiliscum ambulabis/conculcabis leonem et draconem*—Ps. 90 (91), 13.

<sup>291</sup> Thietmar, p. 499, (7,22); see: Leyser, *Communication and Power*, p. 38f.

<sup>292</sup> Thietmar, p. 498, (7,22).

<sup>293</sup> Thietmar, p. 345 (6,22).

<sup>294</sup> Thietmar, p. 363 (6,33); *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 260: [Boleslav] *made a great effort to justify himself, saying: 'May Christ, who knows all, be my witness! That which I must do, I do unwillingly!'*

approach towards the pagan allies of the German ruler, the Liutizi.<sup>295</sup> They evidently made it difficult for the chronicler to fully accept the war against Poland and write a negative description of Boleslav with clear conscience and at every possible moment. This feature of our author's attitude is very well noticeable in his account of the siege of the stronghold of Niemcza in 1017, which was one of the last episodes in the struggle between Henry II and the Polish ruler. Thietmar admired the perseverance of the defenders, who, what is more, put up a cross on the fortification of their stronghold, whose role was to protect them from the pagan Liutizi. Having doubts about the sense of the fights, the chronicler did not hesitate to report—even though he did not have to—that Boleslav Chrobry, after his victory, celebrated his success not only in a secular manner, but also 'rejoiced in the Lord'.<sup>296</sup>

We have approached the point from which we should depart on a short journey to carefully look at a certain report by the bishop of Merseburg. It is a concise description of some, quite intriguing devotional behavior of the Piast ruler. This phrase very well reflects a specific attitude of Thietmar towards Boleslav Chrobry, and it also contains some very important information. The bishop of Merseburg directly addresses to his readers:

Observe, dear reader, how [he—i.e. Boleslav]<sup>297</sup> acted in the course of so many shameful acts. If he either recognized that he had greatly sinned or knew of any justifiable complaint against him, he ordered the canons to be placed before him so that he could discover how this sin ought to be emended. Then, in accordance with those writings, he immediately set about correcting whatever crime had been committed. Nevertheless, he is still more inclined to sin recklessly than to remain in salutary penance.<sup>298</sup>

This text is quite laconic and perhaps for this reason has not received its due commentary. In fact it is a rather complex message, and at the same time meaningful. On the one hand it refers to a number of important questions concerning the demonstration of power, on the other hand—it reveals some nuances of Thietmar's attitude towards the Polish monarch. The analysis of

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<sup>295</sup> Thietmar, p. 587ff. (8,5); see also: Stanisław Rosik, "Sponsae Christi oraz dii manu facti w Kronice Thietmara. Elementy konwencji dziejopisarskiej w służbie historiologii", in: 'Viae historicae'. Księga, pp. 415–421, p. 418ff.

<sup>296</sup> *laetatur in Domino*—Thietmar, p. 559 (7,64).

<sup>297</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 299: *the king*—what is wrong; see below Latin text; and also: *Thietmar von Merseburg*, pp. 340–341.

<sup>298</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 299; (6,92); Thietmar, p. 449: *Attende, lector, quid inter tot flagicia is faciat. Cum se multum peccasse aut ipse sentit aut aliqua fideli castigatione perpendit, canones coram se poni, qualiterque id debeat emendari, ut quaeratur, precipit ac secundum haec scripta mox scelus peractum purgare contendit. Maior tamen est ei consuetudo periculose delinquendi, quam in salutari penitentia permanendi.*

this excerpt must be combined with a close examination of its place in the structure of the sequence of the chronicle where it belongs.

The chronicler begins the part under consideration with the news that in the early autumn of 1014, king Henry II was gathering his army for an Italian expedition, where in Rome he intended to be crowned emperor. All his liegemen sent their knights to the suzerain. Boleslav was the only one who did not want to do this even though he had received the proper summons.<sup>299</sup> By doing so, the Piast did not keep up his alleged earlier promise (perhaps he had made it at the convention of 1013 in Merseburg).<sup>300</sup> Later on he did not defend his decision at all. Next, Thietmar writes about the duke of Poland that

in a letter to the pope, he had complained that the king's secret plots prevented him from paying the tax he had promised to St Peter, Prince of the Apostles. Then, he sent spies to find out how the king was held in these parts and, wherever possible, lure men away from his favour.<sup>301</sup>

Further on, the chronicler allows himself to condemn, emphatically and ironically, Boleslav as the *celebrated warrior (miles inclitus)*.<sup>302</sup>

Only after these phrases does the above quoted description of Boleslav's behaviour take place, which could offset, to a point, the 'disastrous crimes' of the Polish duke. Nevertheless, the latter—according to the author—predominate. In consequence the chronicler ascribes his main character an inclination for committing sins, by contrast with a real Christian life.<sup>303</sup>

It has to be emphasized that the message on Chrobry's penitential practices was preceded by a short direct appeal to the reader for his attention. This formula reveals how passionate the author was in this respect, which indicates that the whole passage in the chronicle concerns more than just the story which by itself should not have provoked the bishop of Merseburg to show such big emotions. This excerpt of the chronicle seems to be a kind of polemics with some unidentified people who informed Thietmar about the deeds of the Piast duke, doing it in favourable words. Perhaps the voices that praised devotional practices of Boleslav sounded relatively loud in the Saxony of the day, since they, while reaching the chronicler, irritated him. As a result the historiographer allowed himself to form the narration of this

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<sup>299</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 447, (6,92).

<sup>300</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 448, (6,92).

<sup>301</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 446ff., (6,92).

<sup>302</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 299; *Thietmar*, p. 448f., (6,92); see also: Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale*, p. 93ff.

<sup>303</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 449, (6,92).

part in the chronicle in a way to be able to show the insincerity of Chrobry. Moreover, the author wanted to convince his opponents that the Piast's piety was futile since he was disloyal to Henry II, whom he should have served as his liegeman.

In this place Thietmar's argumentation touches the ideological base of the empire of the day and in general the convictions, meticulously cultivated in some Church circles, especially the Saxon ones, that it was the ruler that was to be the foundation, the pillar of the world.<sup>304</sup> Disloyalty and disobedience towards him were regarded as the sins against the God's anointed, whom he considered himself to be.<sup>305</sup>

To extend our analysis it is worth making a reference to an excerpt from the letter by Brun of Querfurt to Henry II, in which the missionary presents the king with some possible benefits which could result from his alliance with Boleslav. At the same time the author suggested that the German monarch could receive, thanks to his Piast ally, a tribute from pagans.<sup>306</sup> It seems quite obvious that he primarily meant the Elbe Slavs, and he certainly returned in the quoted sentence to the situation of an alliance which had existed between the Piasts and the Liudolfings before 1002. As a matter of fact, as we know, the author expressed not only his own opinions, but also of some Saxon lords who were not interested in the war against Poland but the alliance with this country against the Liutizi. These were the views most seemingly Thietmar challenged in his attempt to undermine the value of Boleslav as an indecent, deceptive and thus unreliable ally.<sup>307</sup>

In the quoted passage there is another, less visible element, which was placed by Thietmar to discredit the Piast ruler. Church synods of the day did not recommend that secular lords who were performing their penance should run wars.<sup>308</sup> The chronicler's combination of news on Chrobry's penance with the report on his hostile actions against Henry II, and soon after that about the fights with the newly crowned emperor, were in fact an extra

<sup>304</sup> Stefan Weinfurter, "Authority and Legitimation of Royal Policy and Action. The Case of Henry II", in *Medieval Concepts of the Past*, pp. 19–37, p. 23f.; Schneider, "Thietmar von Merseburg", p. 47ff; Lippelt, *Thietmar von Merseburg*, p. 185ff.

<sup>305</sup> Egon Boshof, "Die Vorstellung vom sakralen Königtum in karolingisch-ottonischer Zeit", in *Das frühmittelalterliche Königtum*, ed. Franz-Reiner Erkens (Berlin – New York, 2005), pp. 331–358, p. 339ff.

<sup>306</sup> *Epistola ad Heinricum*, p. 102.

<sup>307</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 475f. (7,9): Boleslaw = *dux infaustus*; *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 314—this view was shared by the great part of the older modern German historiography, see: Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 193ff.; Claude, *Geschichte des Erzbistums*, p. 252.

<sup>308</sup> Sarah Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance, 900–1050* (Woodbridge, 2001), pp. 1, 8.



commentary written by Thietmar. It aimed to make his readers realize how little value had the description of the Polish duke's devotional behaviour.

What is also significant in this whole matter is that the Piast's practices, which so much irritated the writer hostile to him—as recent studies suggest<sup>309</sup>—concerned not only the devotional sphere, but they also were associated with demonstrating power and emphasizing its Christian character. It is worth examining what could be a deeper sense and message which the religious actions of the Piast duke conveyed.

At the beginning we should notice that if the news on pious practices of the Polish ruler reached Merseburg this indicates that they took place a number of times and their course was to a point public.<sup>310</sup> Penitential customs of the times under consideration have not been fully recognized. It seems that despite the fact that there were collections of canons as well as recommendations directed at synod courts of justice<sup>311</sup>—the forms of expiation were not precisely regulated and oscillated between the two polar opposites. One extreme was what was known as public atonement, which concerned cardinal sins. It was associated with the announcement of the sin as described in the sentence passed by the Church court of justice and this court's recommendations regarding the improvement of the sinner. The other extreme of this phenomenon was what was known as private atonement, also known as secret atonement, recommended during individual confession and made as the compensation for venal sins.<sup>312</sup>

An example of the first kind of expiation, public, is the case of Arduin, the count of Ivrea.<sup>313</sup> The sentence in his case was passed by the synod Church which convened in Rome in April 999 under Otto III and pope Sylvester II. Having been declared guilty, the aristocrat had to confess his sin publicly and make atonement for murdering bishop Peter of Vercelli, which had taken place two years before. His property was handed over to the aggravated diocese. The penitent was excommunicated and thus excluded from the Christian community—he was not allowed to receive Communion. Moreover,

<sup>309</sup> Sarah Hamilton, "The Unique Favor of Penance: The Church and the People c. 800–c. 1000", in *The Medieval World*, eds. Peter Linehan, Janet L. Nelson, (London – New York, 2006), pp. 229–245.

<sup>310</sup> Peter von Moos, "Die Begriffe 'öffentlich' und 'privat' in der Geschichte und bei den Historikern", *Saeculum* 49 (1998), 161–192; see also: Althoff, *Die Macht der Rituale*, p. 106ff.

<sup>311</sup> E.g.: *Das Senhandbuch des Regino von Prüm*, AQDGM 42, ed. Wilfried Hartmann (Darmstadt, 2004).

<sup>312</sup> Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance*, p. 2ff., 8ff; see also: Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics*, p. 85ff.

<sup>313</sup> Ursula Brunhofer, *Arduin von Ivrea und seine Anhänger. Untersuchungen zum letzten italienischen Königtum des Mittelalters* (Augsburg, 1999).

the count was to lay down his arms, refrain from meat, wear special coarse clothing, refrain from sexual activity, and never stay in one place more than two nights. These and other recommendations made him, in fact, a monk, separated from the rest of society.

Not all the penances of this sort looked so severe; they were always, however, associated with a ritual exclusion of the sinner from the 'healthy' part of a Christian community—sometimes in the form of his staged expulsion from a church building. After atonement had been made his ritualized admission to the group of co-believers took place.<sup>314</sup> The background of these activities seems to be connected with the community's willingness to minimize the risk of tarnish everybody's name with a cardinal sin of one of them.

In the case of Boleslav Chrobry the above described atonement could have been meant, but his behaviour was rather associated with the earlier mentioned, private expiation, which was suitable for compensating for less serious sins. It did not necessarily have to be clandestine. In fact it was sometimes performed in the form of theatrical ostentation, maintaining the appearance of being secret.<sup>315</sup> The Piast's actions can be interpreted to have taken place in this way, but, unfortunately, this is only our assumption.<sup>316</sup>

As far as we know, private penance—which became then, in the 10th century, increasingly popular among the elites in connection with the appearance of new, more individualized religiosity<sup>317</sup>—was performed accordingly. A priest interrogated, unlike in the case of Boleslav Chrobry under discussion, the sinner about his sins during his confession. Next he ordered a suitable penance, which was based on the rules of the Church law.<sup>318</sup>

<sup>314</sup> Hamilton, *The Practice of Penance*, p. 1ff.

<sup>315</sup> *Legenda Christiani*, p. 54ff.; *Passio S. Venceslai (Rec. bav.)*, pp. 183–190; *Passio S. Venceslai, Recensio bohémica*, ed. Josef Ludvíkovský, *Listy Filologické* 81 (1958), 58–63; *Sancti Adalberti vita prior*, p. 14f. (c. 9); also: *Sancti Adalberti Pragensis (vita altera)*, p. 11f. (c. 11); and (Otto III)—Stephan Waldhoff, "Der Kaiser in der Krise? Zum Verständnis von Thietmar IV, 48", *DA* 54 (1998), 23–54; further commentary: Martin Heinzelmann, "Sanctitas und 'Tugendadel'. Zu Konzeptionen von 'Heiligkeit' im 5. und 10. Jahrhundert", *Francia* 5 (1977), 741–752; Michałowski, *Zjazd gnieźnieński*, p. 311f.

<sup>316</sup> Ludger Körntgen, "Fortschreibung frühmittelalterlicher Bußpraxis. Burchards 'Liber corrector' und seine Quellen", in *Bischof Burchard von Worms 1000–1025*, ed. Wilfried Hartmann (Mainz, 2000), pp. 199–226; see also: Peter Rakoš, "Das altslawische Poenitential", in *Das heidnische und christliche*, pp. 165–171.

<sup>317</sup> Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil*, p. 177; also: Urszula Borkowska, "Ideał świętości i duchowości w czasach św. Wojciecha w świetle pism hagiograficznych św. Brunona z Kwerfurtu", in *Święty Wojciech w tradycji i kulturze europejskiej*, ed. Kazimierz Śmigiel (Gniezno, 1992), pp. 23–46.

<sup>318</sup> Raymund Kottje, "Busspraxis und Bussritus", in *Segni e riti nella chiesa altomedievale occidentale*, *Settimana di Studio del Centro Italiano di Studi sull'alto Medioevo* 33 (Spoleto, 1987), pp. 369–395, p. 390ff.; see also: Arnold Angenendt (e.a.), "Gezählte Frömmigkeit", *FMS* 29

The situation described by Thietmar slightly differed from the practices of private penance we know. Nevertheless, one has to remember that the matter concerned a ruler. Indeed Boleslav Chrobry behaved in a way suitable for monarchs of his time and according to the authority he possessed on the local Church, which he had received from the emperor during the Gniezno Convention.<sup>319</sup> It was he who listened to the canons and decided which sins he had committed, if any. Thus this was not classic confession. None of the priests acted above the ruler's head then. Chrobry himself, according to the recommendations included in the canons gave himself the right penance. The job of the priests was only to assist the monarch and aid him in his action.

There were certain templates of monarchical piety which were applied in the Carolingian era. They—copied in Germany—could have inspired the Polish ruler. There is some very interesting information for this discussion in the preface to the capitularies of Louis the Pious, written in 918–920. Here the monarch, which was considered to be typical of him,<sup>320</sup> allowed himself to provoke some reflection concerning the moral foundations of his rule as king.<sup>321</sup> According to Louis, the ruler should set an example for his subjects. This is why, when he commits a sin, he has to confess it humbly and do the right penance. It has to be sincere and connected with remorse, which is a prerequisite to be forgiven by Christ and allowed to carry on the rule.<sup>322</sup>

Thus the king's sins were, according to this information, far from being his private matter. Quite the contrary, they, not expiated by confession, incriminated not only himself, but also the whole society.

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(1995), 1–71, p. 8ff.; Bogdan Bolz, “Obrzędy pokuty według kodeksu króla Mieszka II”, *Studia Gnesnensia* 6 (1981), 261–276, s. 263ff.

<sup>319</sup> Gerard Labuda, “Zakres uprawnień władczych nad Kościołem polskim nadanych przez cesarza Ottona III księciu Bolesławowi Chrobremu w Gnieźnie w roku 1000”, *RH* 64 (1998), 7–12; Dariusz Sikorski, “Jakie uprawnienia mieli cesarze do władania polskim Kościołem przed rokiem 1000? Na marginesie pewnej koncepcji Gerarda Labudy”, *Czasopismo Prawno-Historyczne*, 54 (2002), 429–442.

<sup>320</sup> *Theganus, Gesta Hludowici imperatoris, Astronomus, Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, ed. Ernst Tremp, MGH SS RG 64 (Hannover, 1995), pp. 167–278, p. 192ff (c. 13).

<sup>321</sup> *Hludowici Proemium generale ad capitularia tam ecclesiastica quam mundana*, Capitularia regum Francorum 1.1, no. 137, pp. 273–275, see also: Roman Michałowski, “Podstawy religijne monarchii we wczesnym średniowieczu zachodnioeuropejskim. Próba typologii”, *KH* 105 (1998), 3–34.

<sup>322</sup> Marita Blattmann, “‘Ein Unglück für sein Volk’ Der Zusammenhang zwischen Fehlverhalten des Königs und Volkswohl in Quellen des 7.–12. Jahrhunderts”, *FMS* 30 (1996), 80–102.

There was a certain case which must have impressed the Polish ruler—it was an intense penance done by emperor Otto III in his final days.<sup>323</sup> It is difficult to find direct links between Boleslav Chrobry's conduct and the atonement of the last representative of the Ottonian dynasty, as the latter's situation was different from the position and sins of the Polish monarch. However, the Piast court must have received some information about the devotion of the pious ruler of the empire.<sup>324</sup>

Having considered all these examples, the Piast's conduct recorded by Thietmar could be interpreted in different ways. Of course, we shall notice in Boleslav Chrobry's activity an example of Christian modesty that he set for his subjects, who, according to the views of the day, should feel encouraged by the ruler to similar practices of piety. On the other hand, in a more general approach we can notice the bottom line of the Piast's actions. First and foremost, they meant to sacralize and legitimize his authority. The monarch's penance placed him outside the worldly, Church hierarchy, and demonstrated the supernatural status of his power. After all, reading canons publicly—we cannot identify which ones<sup>325</sup>—demonstrated the ruler's link with the legal and religious sphere, traditionally reserved for monarchs (not only in Christian times).<sup>326</sup>

The Piast, acting in the way described above, confirmed his status of an intermediary between Christ, the king of kings, a universal monarch, and the people subjected to his authority. The Polish monarch showed that he kept watch over the sacred peace and the order of his community. He also gave his people law, and made the impression of his actions even bigger by setting his own example.<sup>327</sup> Besides, Boleslav revealed in his interpretation of the religious law his superior position in the sacred hierarchy, above the

<sup>323</sup> Sarah Hamilton, "Otto III's penance: a case study of unity and diversity in the eleventh-century church", *Studies in Church History* 32 (1996), 83–94; Stephan Waldhoff, "Der Kaiser in der Krise? Zum Verständnis von Thietmar IV, 48", *DA* 54 (1998), 23–54.

<sup>324</sup> Swinarski, *Herrscher mit den Heiligen*, p. 64ff.

<sup>325</sup> More on this: Lutger Körntgen, "Fort schreibung frühmittelalterlicher Bußpraxis. Burchards 'Liber corrector' und seine Quellen", in *Bischof Burchard von Worms 1000–1025*, ed. Wilfried Hartmann (Mainz, 2000), pp. 199–226; *Das Senhandbuch des Regino*, p. 3ff. (Introduction); Arnold Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität im Mittelalter* (Darmstadt, 2000), p. 630ff.

<sup>326</sup> Sverre Bagge, *The Political Thought of The King's Mirror*, Mediaeval Scandinavia Supplements 3 (Odense, 1987), p. 50ff.

<sup>327</sup> Kantorowicz, *The Kings of two Bodies*, p. 87ff.; Otto Eberhardt, 'Via regia'. *Der Fürstenspiegel Smaragds von St. Mihiel und seine literarische Gattung*, Münstersche Mittelalter-Schriften 28 (Münster, 1977), p. 430ff.

clergymen, and demonstrated his religious royal prerogatives.<sup>328</sup> Thietmar confirms in another passage of his chronicle that the Piast's practices were not only his passing fancy, but also formed part of a bigger, well-thought-out action. In his analysis, quite in-depth, at least as compared with the interest other chroniclers of the day took in the Slavic land, the bishop of Merseburg examines legal practices existing in his country and praises draconian penalties for breaking the taboo of marriage. Next the famous passage appears in his chronicle about breaking teeth of those sinners who did not fast when ordered to.<sup>329</sup>

What is the most important, however, is that the Piast, performing actions described by the chronicler, demonstrated for his Christian partners, especially German, that he was one of them and that he understood what the ruler's duties were, also in the moral sphere. What is more, he tried to convince his observers that he was very good at what he was doing.

Roman Michałowski has recently noticed that the initiative of extending the period of Lent to the maximum—the most radical idea in the whole of Europe pushed through by Chrobry—aimed to integrate the community and separate it from others.<sup>330</sup> This sort of practice must have reached its goal in the long run, but the origins of the Piast ruler's directive lie probably in his copying royal conduct, in a more intense form, known to us from the Frankish circles, which was also practiced in the Ottonian period.

There is one more mediaeval text which is devoted to the subject under discussion. Thegan, the biographer of Louis the Pious, recorded that maintaining high morale among his people was an important task of the king. Charles the Great taught him during his coronation in Aachen (in the year 813) to *direct the pride and vile to the road of decency*.<sup>331</sup> Later on, in the early days of his rule as king, Louis ordered his envoys to be sent out across the

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<sup>328</sup> Presiding over the bishop's synods and administering the local Church were among the king's duties—Thietmar, p. 35f. (1,24); Oskar Köhler, "Die Ottonische Reichskirche. Ein Forschungsbericht", in *Adel und Kirche*, pp. 141–204, especially: p. 159ff.; Graf Finck von Finkenstein, *Bischof und Reich*, p. 28ff.

<sup>329</sup> Thietmar, p. 583 (V3,2).

<sup>330</sup> Roman Michałowski, "The Nine-Week Lent in Bolesław the Brave's Poland: a Study of the First Piasts' Religious Policy", *Acta Poloniae Historica* 89 (2004), 5–50; and: Roman Michałowski, "Die 'nationale' Interpretation des Christentums im frühmittelalterlichen Polen", in: *Language of Religion—Language of the People. Medieval Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, eds. Ernst Bremer; Susanne Röhl et al. (München, 2006), pp. 357–372.

<sup>331</sup> *superbos et nequissimos homines in viam salutis coactos dirigere—Thegani Vita Hludowici imperatoris*, *Quellen zur karolingischen Reichsgeschichte*, ed. Reinhold Rau, AQDGM 5.1: *Die Reichsannalen, Einhard Leben Karls des Grossen, Zwei "Leben" Ludwigs, Nithard Geschichten* (Darmstadt, 1955), pp. 216–253, p. 218 (c. 6).

country. Their job was to check if any harm or injustice was done to his subjects, which could be compensated by the monarch.<sup>332</sup> In this case the ruler's obligations can be associated with the conviction, widespread in Europe, that he was responsible for maintaining order and peace—*pax* (Slavonic *mir*)<sup>333</sup> of his community.

This sort of concepts formed as though a background to Boleslav Chrobry's practices as recorded by Thietmar. There is also their direct connection with specific devotional actions taken by Henry II, which were noticed by the chronicler. According to him, the German ruler held in Dortmund a great synod.<sup>334</sup> During this event a guild of the prayerful<sup>335</sup> was formed under the leadership of Henry. Among its members were most representatives of the episcopate of the empire and some secular lords. The union aimed to compensate for 'numerous immoralities inside the Church' and to alleviate the 'gravity'<sup>336</sup> of the king's sins by implementing the order to celebrate special prayers after the death of any of the founding members of the guild, alms, as well as extending and toughening customary fasts.<sup>337</sup> This kind of undertaking, augmented with an oath, was to last in theory until the deaths of its participants, who considered each other to be brothers—which was expressed by the special nomenclature of the whole union (*conjuratio, confraternitas*) and his members (*fratres*).<sup>338</sup>

This phenomenon—rooted in the Frankish period,<sup>339</sup> yet still cultivated in Germany of the high Middle Ages—was also known on the territory of

<sup>332</sup> *Theganus, Gesta Hludowici*, p. 192ff. (c. 13).

<sup>333</sup> Dušan Třeštík, "Mír a dobrý rok. Česká státní ideologie mezi křesťanstvím a pohanstvím", *Folia Historica Bohemica* 12 (1988), 23–45; Wojciech Hejnosz, "Mir", *SSS* vol. 3, p. 260ff.; Germ.: "Friede(n)", see: Hans-Jürgen Becker, "Friede", *LMA* 4, p. 919f.; and: Heinrich Brunner, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte*, vol. 2 (Berlin, 1958), p. 55ff.

<sup>334</sup> *Regesta imperii, 2: sächsisches Haus 919–1024, Abt. 4: Die Regesten des Kaiserreiches unter Heinrich II. 1002–1024*, vol. 2, ed. Theodor Graff (Wien – Köln – Graz, 1971), p. 915. Wein-furter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, p. 165f.

<sup>335</sup> The sworn association—see: Oexle, "Die mittelalterlichen Gilden", pp. 75–97; also: Hoffmann, *Mönchskönig und 'rex idiota'*, p. 52.

<sup>336</sup> Thietmar, p. 338.

<sup>337</sup> Thietmar, p. 339ff.: Joachim Wollasch, "Geschichtliche Hintergründe der Dortmunder Versammlung des Jahres 1005", *Westfalen* 58 (1980), 55–69; Ludwig Falkenstein, *Otto III. und Aachen* (Hannover, 1998), p. 175ff.

<sup>338</sup> Karl Schmidt, Joachim Wollasch, "*Societas und Fraternitas*. Begründungen eines kommentierten Quellenwerkes zur Erforschung der Personengruppen des Mittelalters", *FMS* 9 (1975), 1–48.

<sup>339</sup> Karl Schmid, Otto G. Oexle, "Voraussetzungen und Wirkung des Gebetsbundes von Attigny", *Francia* 2 (1974/1975), 71–122; Karl Schmidt, "Bemerkungen zu Synodalverbrüderungen der Karolingerzeit, in *Sprache und Recht. Beiträge zur Kulturgeschichte des Mittelalters. Festschrift für Ruth Schmidt—Wiegand zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Karl Hauck et al, vol. 2 (Berlin – New York, 1986), pp. 693–710.

western Slavs.<sup>340</sup> This practice was of some political significance, just like a similar, in terms of its function and meaning, habit of fraternizing the secular lords with the centres of cult.<sup>341</sup> It integrated people and when they took joint actions in the secular sphere, the guilds found the right justification for this.

The description of the devotional practices performed by Boleslav Chrobry written by Thietmar is too laconic to serve as the basis for coming to far reaching conclusions. One can conclude, however, that the Piast's practices followed the patterns set and cultivated by the Frankish and Ottonian monarchs, including Henry II. His own example was important, especially when demonstrated by stricter fasting and mortifying.<sup>342</sup>

The above mentioned report only lacks references to the eschatological dimension of the actions taken in Poland. Neither does it say whether the ruler formed a union with the clergy and some secular lords. One needs to remember, however, that the quoted excerpts of the chronicle are very laconic and, as a matter of fact, only make a digression. Perhaps, the shape the devotion of the Polish ruler acquired did not completely match the western practices, outlined above. On the other hand, Boleslav Chrobry's conduct certainly corresponded with similar practices of the German monarch.

One can risk an assumption that a kind of proselytizer's zeal, which is noticeable in the extending of the Lent period to the extreme, served to demonstrate the fervor of the Piast's own faith. By doing so, Boleslav Chrobry may have attempted to dismiss the opinions, which appeared in Germany at that time,<sup>343</sup> according to which the inhabitants of newly baptised territories of Central Europe, the Slavs, were 'worse' or even indecent Christians (*mali christiani*).<sup>344</sup>

There are a few more examples, not noticed by Thietmar, which confirm directly or indirectly the attempts made by Boleslav Chrobry to reach the

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<sup>340</sup> *Cosmae Pragensis*, p. 147 (2, 42):...*obligat, ut per totam quadragesimam [...] tam pro vivis quam pro defunctis psalteria legant*; (bishop of Prague Jaromir-Gebhard: 1068–1090) and duke Sobeslav I (1125–1140): *Canonici Wissegradensis*, p. 146: *ut sicut mos est, pro defunctis officia peragerent, scilicet prima et secunda et tertia et septima die, et cetera usque ad anniversarium sic commemoraciones facerent pro ipsis, alii missas pro salute vivorum, alii pro peccatis, alii pro fidelibus defunctis*.

<sup>341</sup> Wollasch, "Geschichtliche Hintergründe der", p. 60.

<sup>342</sup> 'Scriptura custos memoriae', pp. 511–522.

<sup>343</sup> See chapter 1.1. of this book.

<sup>344</sup> Fraesdorf, *Der barbarische Norden*, passim; see also: *Widukind*, p. 88 (2,1): 'Accipe', inquit, 'hunc gladium, quo eicias omnes Christi adversarios, barbaros sed malos Christianos, auctoritate divina tibi tradita omni potestate totius imperii Francorum, ad firmissimam pacem omnium Christianorum'.

ideal of a truly pious monarch. This model—it has to be stressed—was gradually applied everywhere in the whole area of the post-Carolingian Europe, and the royal devotion was not regarded as a personal quality of a ruler, but as an element of the legitimization of his rule.<sup>345</sup>

The Czech chronicler, Cosmas, wrote in his work that the Polish ruler ordered a huge golden cross to be made for Gniezno cathedral. The duke weighed the precious metal for the cast in a way that it had to equal the triple weight of his own body.<sup>346</sup> Pondering over the meaning of the foundation made by Boleslav Chrobry one should associate this deed with a number of similar gestures of European monarchs. They also wished their figure to be placed—on different artistic objects—with the cross in the background, or to be somehow associated with the cross.<sup>347</sup> All this was connected with the concept of piety, formed as early as in the Carolingian period,<sup>348</sup> which was made fashionable by the Cluniac monks and spread in the Western Europe of the 10th and 11th centuries. The relics of the Holy Cross were the main object of religious adoration in this practice. We know that this sort of religious customs also reached Poland through the agency of the court of Otto III.<sup>349</sup> Boleslav Chrobry's special dedication to this particular form of piety was another element that linked him with the last representative of the Liudolfing dynasty.

The spear—a present given by the emperor in 1000—which had in its shaft some particles of the nail from the Holy Cross could have been a direct reason of the Piast's interest in the above mentioned cult. At that time, the

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<sup>345</sup> Weinfurter, "Authority and Legitimation", p. 22ff.; Johannes Fried, "Tugend und Heiligkeit. Beobachtungen und Überlegungen zu den Herrscherbildern Heinrichs III. in Echnachener Handschriften". in *Mittelalter. Annäherung an die fremde Zeit*, Schriftenreihe Universität Regensburg 19, ed. Wilfried Hartmann (Regensburg, 1993), pp. 41–85.

<sup>346</sup> *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica*, p. 90, (2,5).

<sup>347</sup> Josef Deér, "Das Kaiserbild im Kreuz. Ein Beitrag zur politischen Theologie des früheren Mittelalters", in *Byzanz und das abendländische Herrschertum. Ausgewählte Aufsätze von Josef Deér*, ed. Paul Classen, VuF 21 (Sigmaringen, 1977), pp. 125–177; Hoffmann, *Taufsymbolik im mittelalterlichen*, pl. 21, 40–41, 46; Klaus G. Beuckers, "Das ottonische Stifterbild. Bildtypen, Handlungsmotive und Stifterstatus in ottonischen und frühsalischen Stifterdarstellungen", in *Die Ottonen. Kunst-Architektur-Geschichte*, eds. Klaus G. Beuckers, Johannes Cramer, Michael Imhof (Petersberg, 2002), pp. 63–102, p. 81.

<sup>348</sup> Peter Bloch, "Zum Dedikationsbild im Lob des Kreuzes des Hrabanus Maurus", in *Das erste Jahrtausend. Kultur und Kunst im werdenden Abendland an Rhein und Ruhr*, ed. Victor H. Elbern (Düsseldorf, 1962), vol. 1, pp. 471–494.

<sup>349</sup> Huschner, "Abt Odilo von Cluny", p. 150ff.; see also: Elżbieta Dąbrowska, "Cluny a św. Wojciech. Relacja *Historia libri quinque* Rudolfa Glabera o męczeństwie św. Wojciecha", *KH* 110 (2003), 5–13; and Wolfgang Teske, "Laien, Laienmönche und Laienbrüder in der Abtei Cluny", *FMS* 11 (1977), 288–339, p. 320: *Boleslaus, dux Poloniae*; p. 321, reg. 1: abbot Odilo (993–1048), no. 5: *Casimirus laic*.



insignia weapon of the emperor had reached a rank of an independent relic surrounded by great adoration. It was also associated with the royal function,<sup>350</sup> which the Polish ruler aspired to. Perhaps, the representative of the Piast dynasty also possessed some other particles of the Holy Cross relics.<sup>351</sup>

Another fact which confirms Boleslav Chrobry's dedication to the cult is associated with placing his grave inside the same confession with the Altar of the Holy Cross located in the architectural centre of Poznań Cathedral.<sup>352</sup> In addition, the inscription on the tombstone—unfortunately known from a later text—described the late king as a true 'athlete of Christ'—*Athleta Christi*. This sort of terminology, which originally applied to outstanding monks-ascetics, began to be used at that time to name those monarchs who not only wanted to emphasize their piety and readiness to fight for faith, but also wished to demonstrate their royal dignity and closeness to Christ.<sup>353</sup> Besides, the verse tombstone inscription stressed Boleslav's links with the worldly centre of Christ's authority, Rome, and the protection of St. Peter, which was to cover the country of the Piasts.<sup>354</sup>

All the outlined actions taken by the Piast and the ideas he propagated must have been known to Thietmar, who was usually perfectly well informed about the situation in the region. However, the chronicler, either distanced himself—as we have noticed—from this matter, mentioning it tritely whenever it suited the structure of his narration, or ignored it completely.

At this stage, we should make another reference to the problem mentioned by the bishop of Merseburg. While describing the Polish military campaign against Ruthenia in 1018, Thietmar, calling Chrobry 'an old lecher',<sup>355</sup> mentions that he kidnapped Vladimir's daughter and 'illegitimately forgot his wedded wife'.<sup>356</sup>

The opinion articulated by Thietmar is sometimes supported by some historians who suggest, or even directly conclude, that Boleslav's piety must have been indecent. After all, they say, the Polish ruler, having married Oda,

<sup>350</sup> Fried, *Otto III und Bolesław*, pp. 56ff., 123ff. *passim*.

<sup>351</sup> Dąbrowska, "La relique Saint Clou", pp. 48–57.

<sup>352</sup> Tomasz Janiak, "Czy Bolesław Chrobry był czczony jako święty? Z badań nad przestrzenią liturgiczną przedromańskiej katedry w Poznaniu (do połowy XI w.)", SA 44 (2003), 67–95.

<sup>353</sup> Johannes Fechter, *Cluny, Adel und Volk. Studien über das Verhältnis des Klosters zu den Ständen: 910–1156* (Stuttgart, 1966), p. 58ff.; Erich Hoffmann, *Die heiligen Könige bei den Angelsachsen und den skandinavischen Völkern. Königsheliger und Königshaus* (Neumünster, 1975), p. 68ff.

<sup>354</sup> Kürbis, *Na progach historii*, vol. 2, p. 273ff.

<sup>355</sup> *antiquus fornicator*—Thietmar, p. 621 (8,32).

<sup>356</sup> *oblita contectali sua niuste*—Thietmar, p. 623 (8,32).

the daughter of Ekkehard, the margrave of Meissen, a couple of months before, kidnapped Predslava, the sister of Jaroslav the Wise, the duke of Kiev, and lived with her like a husband, which was bigamy. We reach a very serious problem, which is in fact a separate issue, and there is no room for it to be discussed here. Let us only say in brief that past generations of historians who condemned Boleslav for his alleged debauchery did not notice a few fundamental features of the morals of that epoch, which were indeed different than in later times.

An important circumstance, which should be taken into consideration, was the fact that the Church, at least in Central Europe before the turning point in its history known as 'the Gregorian' reform, almost completely ignored the institutional marriage between the secular people. And in general, sexual matters concerned the clergy only when sexual scandals which were against the time-honoured tradition took place, and only those that could expose the community to the wrath of God. Those included the cases when women were unfaithful to their husbands, the contrary practice was hardly ever mentioned or not mentioned at all by the moralists of the day.<sup>357</sup> From the 10th century onwards the approach of the clergy towards marriage began to gradually change. Supervising consanguinity between the fiancées started so as to prevent any possible cases of breaking exogamy.<sup>358</sup> It was not until later that the interest taken in marriage showed results in the idea of its sacralization through the Church's approval of matrimony. At that time other restrictions, also regarding the unfaithfulness of men, occurred.

One has to remember, however, that monarchs, even though they were theoretically subject to the same religious restrictions as their subjects, were also liable for another, very old code of norms and convictions. This code indeed approved of their sexual behaviour, even extramarital, which was perceived as a good omen, or even a magic charm—a kind of magic—aiming to increase the fertility of their land and people.<sup>359</sup> This exception was respected also by the Church for a very long time.

In the particular case of kidnapping Predslava by Boleslav other customs also matter. They justified, or even sanctioned the winner's violence against the defeated party. They have already been analyzed and described elsewhere,

<sup>357</sup> Thietmar, p. 583 (8,3); see also: Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität*, p. 273ff.

<sup>358</sup> Jerzy Strzelczyk, "Między sacrum a profanum. Sprawa Irmingardy i Ottona z Hammersteinu", *KH* 112 (2005), 21–31.

<sup>359</sup> Gerardus van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, vol. 1 (New York, 1963), p. 115ff.; Marc Bloch, *Die wunder tätigen Könige* (München, 1998), p. 110ff., 193ff. passim; Jean-Paul Roux, *Le Roi: mythes et symboles* (Paris, 1995), p. 21ff. passim.

and there is no need to return to this matter.<sup>360</sup> It is only worth mentioning that even Thietmar, who was far from praising Chrobry for his conduct towards the Ruthenian princess, did not feel determined enough to condemn him decidedly for this deed. He seems to have considered Boleslav's wicked deed to be normal.

This problem has been outlined here to strongly emphasize that the excesses—even of sexual nature—of the king formed a certain sphere, different from religiosity, and at that time were not a serious obstacle to consider the monarch extremely pious, as long as he openly expressed his religiosity, founded churches, supported clergymen and missions. Boleslav Chrobry did all this fervently and with great determination. In favourable circumstances he would even have a chance to become a saint.<sup>361</sup> Thietmar, however, as it has been shown, was largely skeptical about these signs of religiosity, even though he wrote about them, which is to his credit.

All things considered, the matters discussed here created a kind of majestic portrait of Boleslav Chrobry, which he himself created, to a large extent purposefully, with his actions and behaviour. On the other hand, this *quasi* portrait, which showed the Piast as possessing all the social skills and civilized, also formed a certain package of rules and suggestions of co-operation that he aimed at the outside world, including the German monarch.

Now it is time to deal with the question of how the other party engaged in this specific dialogue, Henry II, responded to Boleslav's proposals and how he understood the practical aspects of the co-operation between the empire and the Piast state as well as mutual relations between the rulers of these two countries.

### 2.3 CONGRESS OF MERSEBURG, JULY 1002

During a meeting between the secular and Church elites of eastern Germany with Henry II,<sup>362</sup> which took place in July 1002 in Merseburg and was also attended by Boleslav Chrobry, an unprecedented incident took place. As the Polish ruler and his retinue were leaving the castle, they were attacked and many of them killed, the duke himself only barely escaping with his life. The

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<sup>360</sup> Jacek Banaszekiewicz, "Bolesław i Predsława. Uwagi o uroczystości stanowienia władcy w związku z wejściem Chrobrego do Kijowa", *KH* 96 (1990), 3–35.

<sup>361</sup> Janiak, "Czy Bolesław Chrobry", pp. 67–95.

<sup>362</sup> *Regesta Imperii*, 2, Abt. 4, p. 867f., no. 1493 b, c; no. 1494; *RGSEO*, 3, pp. 199–202, no. 355–356).

attempt on the ruler's life was to have significant and far-reaching consequences as it led to many years of incessant wars, deeply and irrevocably changing the political reality of the region.

However, it is not only due to these dramatic events and their consequences that the Merseburg incident is of such interest to us. German sources devote a lot of attention to the fact that during the congress Henry II was officially recognised as king by the Saxons, which was, after all, the main reason for calling the meeting in the first place. Boleslav Chrobry's participation, however, is also reported as an event of significance.

The way in which the texts depict the Polish ruler is highly telling in the context of the issues to be discussed here. Moreover, a feature uncommon among the available sources of the period, the texts also provide a particularly interesting insight into the language of certain gestures used by Henry II's entourage, whose purpose was to communicate the changed status of Boleslav in relation to the German monarch.

Curiously enough, the actual fact of the Piast ruler's participation in the congress of the elites of the empire, as well as the origins of the conflict it instigated, have not yet received thorough attention from neither Polish nor German historians.<sup>363</sup> Although numerous scholars have admittedly made some sort of reference to the events in question, it has always been on the margin of much more general deliberations, in the context of the succession to Otto III's throne,<sup>364</sup> or while considering the general condition of the relations between the Piast dynasty and the empire at the threshold of the 11th century.<sup>365</sup> In either case the analyses seemed to avoid any deeper insight into the complexities of the problem. Polish researchers, readily but without any actual substantiation (as the matter itself is not as unambiguous as it may seem), tend to attribute the inspiration of the attack to Henry II.<sup>366</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> This convention is often skipped in recent studies—see e.g.: Nowacki, "Symbolika prawna zjazdów", pp. 1–28.

<sup>364</sup> Walter Schlesinger, "Die sogenannte Nachwahl Heinrichs II. in Merseburg", in *Geschichte in der Gesellschaft. Festschrift für Karl Bosl zum 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Franz Prinz, Franz-Joachim Schmale, Ferdinand Seibt (Stuttgart, 1974), pp. 350–369, p. 352f.; the author did not mention the attempt on the life of Bolesław. Similarly: Weinfurter, "Der Anspruch Heinrichs II.," and: Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, p. 211 passim; also: Armin Wolf, "Die Herkunft der Grafen von Northeim aus dem Hause Luxemburg und der Mord am Königskandidaten Ekkehard von Meißen 1002", *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 69 (1997), 427–440.

<sup>365</sup> Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder*, p. 18ff. Görlich, "Eine Wende im Osten", pp. 118–122.

<sup>366</sup> Zakrzewski, *Bolesław Chrobry Wielki*, p. 185; Grabski, *Bolesław Chrobry*, p. 126f.; with caution: Strzelczyk, *Bolesław Chrobry*, p. 102.

German researchers on the other hand either support the above assumption or, more commonly, report on the assault on Boleslav without deliberating over the matter by simply quoting the somewhat pompous commentary provided by Thietmar: *May God be my witness, this was without the involvement or knowledge of the king!*.<sup>367</sup> Meanwhile, other issues related to the actual participation of the Polish ruler in the Merseburg rite recognising Henry II's authority have been almost entirely ignored by historiography.<sup>368</sup>

### 2.3.1 *The Context and Course of the Congress, Boleslav Chrobry's Participation*

There are only two relatively comprehensive texts discussing the course of said meeting held in 1002: the Chronicle of Thietmar of Merseburg and the *Life of Emperor Henry* by Adalbold of Utrecht.<sup>369</sup> The comments written down by the bishop of Merseburg are more valuable in the context of our deliberations, due to its greater comprehensiveness and originality. Adalbold's work is mostly a repetition of the Saxon chronicler's text, and in its parts pertaining directly to matters in question, much less detailed than Thietmar's work. It can, however, alongside other commentaries in most cases only marginally pertaining to the events in Merseburg,<sup>370</sup> provide comparative material in the interpretation of the Saxon chronicler's observations.

All source texts depicting the course of the congress stress the fact that the new king, crowned in Mainz on June 6th, was welcomed in Kirchberg (near Jena) by Wilhelm, one of the most eminent magnates from Thuringia. The count, a long time devoted supporter of the Bavarian, paid due homage to the arriving lord and, along with a number of other local nobles, acknowl-

<sup>367</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 217 (5,18); *Thietmar*, p. 275: *per Deum testor, absque regis consilio et consciencia.*; see: Althoff, *Die Ottonen*, p. 208; see: Berndt Schneidmüller, "Neues über einen alten Kaiser? Heinrich II. in der Perspektive der modernen Forschung", *Bericht des Historischen Vereins Bamberg* 131 (1997), 13–41, p. 14ff.; quite a lot of attention (with very interesting conclusions) is devoted to our problem by: Görlich, "*Eine Wende im Osten*", p. 118ff.; sometimes the reasons of the wars between Henry II and Boleslav the Brave are seen not in the Merseburg assassination attempt, but in the Piast's refusal to pay tribute from Bohemia, taken by him in 1003: Eckhard Müller-Martens, "The Ottonian as Kings and Emperors", in *The New Cambridge Medieval History*, vol. 3: c. 900–c. 1024, ed. Timothy Reuter (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 233–266, p. 262; see also: Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte*, p. 612.

<sup>368</sup> Sochacki, *Stosunki publiczno-prawne*, p. 66ff.

<sup>369</sup> *De Vita Heinrici II imperatoris*, pp. 56–58, (c. 10–11); "Adalbold von Utrecht", p. 160.

<sup>370</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 518; *Annales Magdeburgenses*, ed. Georg H. Pertz, MGH SS 18 (Hannoverae, 1859), pp. 105–196–a. 1002; *Annalista Saxo*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS 6 (Hannoverae, 1844), pp. 542–777, a. 1002.

edged him as the new ruler.<sup>371</sup> The situation was quite untypical, Henry II was crowned in Aachen,<sup>372</sup> a city technically not eligible to hold the ceremony, and had at the time only been formally recognised by Franconians.<sup>373</sup>

The act of Kirchberg would pave the way for the acceptance of the new monarch by the then most powerful member-nation of the empire, the Saxons, for indeed in those days Thuringia itself did not play any significant political role and was treated as little more than a gate to Saxony. From the Bavarian's perspective, the said act of servility may not have been an absolute necessity, but given the nearing meeting with Saxon nobles, any argument that could strengthen his position in these negotiations would have been of great value. The congress was taking place in the territories of the east German lords who had always greatly valued their freedoms, and even though the succession had generally already been accepted,<sup>374</sup> the assembly could lead to frictions or even open opposition to the new rule,<sup>375</sup> and in effect thwart the monarch's attempts to solidify his power.

On July 24th, Henry II arrived in Merseburg where he was welcomed by Esiko, the local count who had already gained the king's favour while defending, in the spring of the same year, a number of Saxon strongholds from margrave Ekkehart of Meissen, the Bavarian's rival to the throne. Henry was also welcomed by church dignitaries, carefully listed by the chronicler,<sup>376</sup> and—far more laconically mentioned—secular lords:

<sup>371</sup> Thietmar, p. 269 (5,14).

<sup>372</sup> Alois Schulte, *Die Kaiser—und Königskrönungen zu Aachen 813–1531* (Darmstadt, 1965).

<sup>373</sup> Roderich Schmidt, *Königsumritt und Huldigung in ottonisch-salischer Zeit*, VuF 6 (Konstanz-Stuttgart, 1961), p. 114ff.

<sup>374</sup> Schlesinger, "Die sogenannte Nachwahl", p. 356; Reinhard Schneider, "Die Königserhebung Heinrichs II. im Jahre 1002", *DA*, 28, 1972, 1, pp. 73–104, p. 85; Keller, "Ritual, Symbolik und", p. 30.

<sup>375</sup> The Saxons could have considered Henry to be Bavarian. Adalbold in his work called Bavaria Henry's *nativa terra—De Vita Heinrici*, p. 60 (c. 14); Schlesinger, "Die sogenannte Nachwahl", p. 355.

<sup>376</sup> Thietmar, p. 271 (V, 15): *Huc conveniunt archiepiscopi Lievizo Bremensis et Gisilerus Magadaburhgiensis cum caeteris confratribus, Rethario Patheburnensi, Bernwardo Hillinesemensi, Arnulfo Halverstidensi, Ramwardo [Mindensi, Egedo] Misnensi, Bernhario Ferdensi, Hugone Citicensi.*—see also: Schubert, "Der Reichsepiskopat", pp. 93–102, and: Zielinski, *Der Reichsepiskopat in spätottonischer*.

dukes Bernhard<sup>377</sup> and Boleslav [Chrobry] with the margraves Liutar<sup>378</sup> and Gero,<sup>379</sup> and the count palatine Frederick.<sup>380</sup> Many others were also there, both bishops and counts, but it would take too long to give their names individually.<sup>381</sup>

The congress was attended by most if not all Saxon bishops, as well as most likely the vast majority of the more distinguished lords from the eastern lands of the empire, i.e. the backbone of the Ottonian dynasty's rule. It is important to notice the eminent position of Boleslav Chrobry, the quoted sources consequently mention him in the same rank as German magnates, immediately after Bernhard the duke of Saxony. We can assume that the order of precedence corresponds to the then political hierarchy in the region, with the central position reserved for the German monarch. The assumption seems further justified by the fact that church dignitaries were also mentioned in the texts in the order corresponding to their rank.<sup>382</sup> The only exception among the source texts of the period can be found in the so called Annals of Quedlinburg where the Polish ruler was clearly depicted separately from the lords of the empire:

Bernhard, the duke and the Saxon lords arrived with magnificent retinues, were favourably welcomed by him [Henry] and soon proclaimed him their lord and sovereign. And there was also Boleslav, the duke of Poland, who came seeking the king's favour, promising peace and alliance, neither of which would later prove to last.<sup>383</sup>

<sup>377</sup> Bernard I Billung, Duke of Saxony 973–1011; see: Karl Jordan, "Bernhard I, Herzog von Sachsen", *LMA* 1, p. 1986f.; H.-W. Goetz, "Das Herzogtum der Billunger", p. 180ff.; Ernst Schubert, "Sachsen und Slaven um das Jahr 1000", in *Bernward von Hildesheim*, pp. 209–216.

<sup>378</sup> Liuthar, Count of Walbeck (995–1003)—see e.g. Lippelt, *Thietmar von Merseburg*, p. 46ff.

<sup>379</sup> Gero II, Margrave of the Saxon eastern march (993–1015)—see: Ernst Karpf, "Gero II", *LMA* 4, p. 1349.

<sup>380</sup> Thietmar, p. 135 (note no. 110), Ruth Schölkopf, *Die sächsischen Grafen, 919–1024* (Göttingen, 1957), p. 84f., 185 (tabl.)

<sup>381</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 216; Thietmar, p. 271 (5,15): *ducibus autem Bernhardo ac Bolizlavo cum marchionibus Liuthario et Gerone ac palatino comite Fritherico alisque quampluribus tam episcopis quam comitibus, quorum nomina longum est enarrare per singula.*

<sup>382</sup> Karl-Heinz Spieß, "Rangdenken und Rangstreit im Mittelalter", in *Zeremoniel und Raum*, Residenzforschung 6 ed. Werner Paravicini (Sigmaringen, 1997), pp. 39–61; Thomas Zotz, "*Palium et alia quedam archiepiscopatus insignia.* Zum Beziehungsgefüge und zu Rangfragen der Reichskirchen im Spiegel der päpstlichen Privilegierung des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts", in *Festschrift für Berent Schwineköper*, pp. 155–175; Voss, *Herrschartreffen im frühen*, p. 176ff.

<sup>383</sup> *Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 518: *Illo Bernhardus dux et Saxonum primates cum decore suorum convenientes, benigne ab eo suscepti sunt, moxque dominum sibi illum, ac regem elegerunt. Sed et Bolizlavonem Poloniae ducem occurrisse et regis gratiam sibi supplicasse, foedere*

The quoted passage is of much less value than the works of Thietmar or Adalbold, as it is a second-hand account of the analysed events. What it can surely represent, however, is a certain attitude of the part of Saxon elites which had always stood in opposition to Boleslav Chrobry.<sup>384</sup> The above issue will be considered in a later section of this discussion. For now, let us return to structure of the Merseburg congress.

After welcoming Henry II, in the morning of the following day, July 25th 1002, a ceremony begun which was attended by all the gathered nobles. It was presided over by the Saxon duke, Bernhard, who—as stated by Thietmar—presented the king with the participants' postulates and a statement of their rights, followed by the question as to what Henry proposed to offer them. Prior to the Bavarian's arrival, a meeting between said lords had likely taken place, as the chronicler clearly suggests that the words with which Bernhard addressed the monarch had been prepared and agreed upon by the ceremony's participants.

Then, once the elect duly ensured that he would respect the law and satisfy the presented demands, the lords formally recognised him as their sovereign by acclamation. The act was ritually validated by the Saxon duke who presented Henry with the sacred spear—the symbol of rule over all the state. The Saxons themselves did not have their separate, "tribal" insignia of power, therefore the gesture of passing over the same spear<sup>385</sup> as the one used previously in Mainz could be interpreted as simply a confirmation of the earlier coronation ceremony.

The ceremony was then concluded—after the singing of laudatory church hymns—by an oath of fealty and allegiance sworn by the gathered nobles, possibly in the order earlier stipulated by the chroniclers. Both Thietmar and Adalbold state that the oath was also offered by Boleslav Chrobry who participated, along with the bishops and German counts gathered in Merseburg, in the formal acclamation and the entire rite of enthronement.<sup>386</sup>

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*pacis promisso, reperiunt; quae quia firma non fuit, postmodum patuit.*—Wattenbach, Holtzmann, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*, vol. 1, pp. 44–46.

<sup>384</sup> This source is sometimes regarded as the medium of the emperor's court, but the matter is more complicated—Wojtecki, "Slavica beim Annalisten", p. 162ff.

<sup>385</sup> Karl J. Leyser, *Rule and Conflict in an Early Medieval Society. Ottonian Saxony* (London 1979), p. 100; see also: Adelson, "The Holy Lance and"; Fried, *Otto III und Boleslaw*, p. 127ff.

<sup>386</sup> *De Vita Heinrici*, p. 56ff. (c. 10–11): *Benno dux Saxonum, Bulizlavus dux Sclavorum, Liebezo archiepiscopus Bremensis, Benno episcopus Hildenenensis, Ratherius episcopus Pavebrenensis, Arnulf Halverstetensis, ceteri episcopi de Saxonia et comites plurimi in festivitate sancti Iacobi rego occurunt, acclamatum suscipiunt, collaudant, collaudatio manus singuli per ordinem reddunt, redditus manibus fidem suam per sacramenta promittunt, fide promissa regem coronant, coronatum in solio regio locant, locatum debita congratulatione venerantur. His*



After the excerpt describing the oath of fealty, Thietmar carries on directly to the account of Boleslav Chrobry's efforts to secure the award of Meissen along with themarch controlled from the stronghold. Eventually, however, the monarch agreed only to the Piast retaining the regions of Lausitz and Milzeni, while Meissen itself passed on to Guncelin, the brother of margrave Ekkehard.<sup>387</sup> The Saxon chronicler underlines the fact that the Piast duke went to great lengths to sway the king into grant him Meissen *at whatever cost*.<sup>388</sup> He also adds, however, that even the award of the march to Guncelin<sup>389</sup>—which, after obtaining it for himself proved unachievable, was what the Polish duke eventually also endeavoured to advocate—was not an easy victory for Boleslav. The author also observes that margrave Henry of Schweinfurt (from Bavarian Nordmark)

held Boleslav in great esteem and aided him freely and amicably in whatever way he could.<sup>390</sup>

The negotiations between the Piast and Henry II were described after the acclamation and the fealty ceremony, but indeed we cannot know in what actual order said events took place. Thietmar never paid much heed to the strict chronological order of the described sequences, he was much more concerned with logical relations between the described episodes. It is quite certain that Boleslav's aspirations to secure the fief of Meissen for himself were general knowledge among the Saxons even before the king's arrival to Merseburg. Interestingly, a number of nobles, as will be detailed below, accepted the legitimacy of the Piast's postulates. Others, however, strongly opposed them, as is clearly evidenced by the subsequent turn of events. Naturally, Bernhard's opening oration was rather unlikely to include a presen-

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*strenue peractis, Bulizlavus inde discedens, ab ipsa die, qua fidem promiserat et promissam sacramento firmaverat, perversa meditari et meditata, prou potuit, cepit machinari. Ipse enim et Hezelo, colloctione in invicem habita, alter alterius venenatis consiliis tactus, uterque cepit quod utrumque male finisse pudit.* Polish historiography once rejected this sources as deceitful, except for: Grabski, *Bolesław Chrobry*, p. 123f.

<sup>387</sup> Ernst Karpf, "Guncelin", *LMA* 4, p. 1795; Holtzmann, "Beiträge zur Geschichte", pp. 108–129; Bleiber, "Ekkehard I. Markgraf von", pp. 96–111.

<sup>388</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 217; *Thietmar*, p. 275 (5,18): *tantummodo innumerabili pecunia*. It was rather normally then—see e.g.: *RGSEO*, 3, p. 207, no. 362; more on this: Johannes Schultze, "Nordmark und Altmark", *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel-und Ostdeutschlands* 6 (1957), 77–106.

<sup>389</sup> Boleslav Chrobry was called by Thietmar brother of Guncelin: *Thietmar*, p. 275 (5,18), p. 301 (5,36)—commentary: Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder*, p. 20ff.; Holtzmann, "Beiträge zur Geschichte", pp. 108–129; Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte*, p. 611.

<sup>390</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 217; *Thietmar*, p. 274 (5,18).

tation of Boleslav's wishes.<sup>391</sup> Through his presence at the gathering, during the acclamation, the Polish duke seems to have only generally acknowledged Henry II's authority (both over the empire and himself).<sup>392</sup> It was only later, possibly even after several days,<sup>393</sup> but before ceremony and the oath of fealty sworn by the Piast, during more particular negotiations, that the actual character of the mutual relationship between the rulers was to be established. It was also when the mentioned controversy over Meissen took place.

Adalbold's depiction of the Merseburg election was somewhat different from Thietmar's:

on the day of Saint Jacob, they welcomed the king, proclaimed and acknowledged him [as king] and individually, in due order offered their oaths of fealty, swearing their allegiance, and once the oaths were finished they crowned him as their king and lead him to the royal throne, where, as he took his seat, they celebrated him with due contentment.<sup>394</sup>

The chronicler knew nothing of the dispute over Meissen between Henry II and Boleslav. He also fails to mention the attack on the Polish duke.<sup>395</sup> What the text does convey is the author's complaints about Boleslav's and Henry of Schweinfurt's dishonesty and hypocrisy, as the two allegedly started conspiring as early as on the day of swearing their oaths to Henry II.

We may only speculate why the chronicler decided to omit such a significant and unusual event as an attack on a king's guest to the *curia regis*.<sup>396</sup> What we do know is that Adalbold composed his account after a dozen or so years from the events in question and described matters of importance to the royal court of the day.<sup>397</sup> He would therefore depict only the first part of the meeting between the nobles and their monarch: the initial acclamation,<sup>398</sup>

<sup>391</sup> Thietmar, 271ff. (5,16).

<sup>392</sup> The question is complex and burden with modern national prejudices; see: Labuda, *Studia nad początkami*, vol., pp. 519–521; Zernack, "Die deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen", pp. 29–42.

<sup>393</sup> Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, p. 54; *Regesta Imperii*, 2, Abt. 4, p. 869, no. 1495.

<sup>394</sup> *De Vita Heinrici*, p. 56ff. (c. 10–11); see above note 25.

<sup>395</sup> *De Vita Heinricis*, pp. 56–58, (c. 11): *His strenue peractis, Bulizlavus inde discedens, ab ipsa die, qua fidem promiserat et promissam sacramento firmaverat, perversa meditari et meditata, prou potuit, cepit machinari. Ipse enim et Hezelo, collocutione in invicem habita, alter alterius venenatis consiliis tactus, uterque cepit quod utrumque male finisse puduit.*

<sup>396</sup> Where, after all was a rule for immunity, Lat. *pax* Germ.: *Friede*; Slav. *Mir* see: Hejnosz, "Mir", p. 260ff. and: Władysław Sobociński, "Mir książęcy", *SSS* vol. 3, pp. 261–262; Becker, "Friede"; Brunner, *Deutsche Rechtsgeschichte*, p. 55ff.

<sup>397</sup> "Adalbold von Utrecht", p. 136 (Introduction).

<sup>398</sup> Janet Nelson, *Politics and Ritual in Early Medieval Europe* (London 1986), pp. 283–307.

the declarations of fealty and the oaths.<sup>399</sup> But he omitted, as less important from the perspective of establishing Henry II as the king, other acts that could have been performed by the already fully legitimized monarch: i.e. granting fiefs and appointments to his subjects. In Adalbold's narration, the later sequence included the matter of Meissen as well as the assault on Boleslav.

It may be assumed that the chronicler wished to hold back the rather shameful fact that Henry II's guest had been attacked in this manner, not to mention the matter of not punishing the guilty parties by the king. It is also quite likely, however, that the incident was not nearly as important from the perspective of the royal court as it was for Thietmar, and that it was not perceived as connected with the later conflicts with Boleslav Chrobry. In Adalbold's opinion, the hostilities between Poland and Germany originated from the Piast's refusal to pay homage from Bohemia (which came under Boleslav's authority in 1003) as demanded by Henry II.<sup>400</sup> It is also noteworthy that incidents like the one in Merseburg were not unheard of in those days, particularly when warriors from two opposing factions met. Thietmar himself recounts a similar episode which took place during the congress gathered for the crowning of Cunegunde, Henry II's wife, on 18th August 1002.<sup>401</sup>

Historians most commonly interpret the discussed events following the path Thietmar had set for them, somewhat despite himself, in indicating a connection between the German monarch and the attack on Boleslav. Meanwhile, a closer analysis of the account conveyed by the bishop does not necessarily impose such an understanding. Indeed, it is the chronicler himself who inspires the dispute, as in his evident antipathy towards the Piast he suggests that there was a keen dispute concerning the control over Meissen between the monarch and the Polish duke, one eventually won by the former. In doing so Thietmar seems willing to cover up the rather intriguing fact that the Piast ruler was awarded power over Lausitz and Milzeni, both regions long controlled by the empire and of considerable political importance as

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<sup>399</sup> There was some similarity to the enthronement of Otton I in 936, see: Hagen Keller, "Die Einsetzung Ottos I. zum König (Aachen, 7. August 936) nach dem Bericht Widukinds von Corvey", in *Krönungen Könige in Aachen*, pp. 265–273; see also: *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica*, p. 77f., (1, 42); commentary: Roderich Schmidt, "Die Einsetzung der böhmischen Herzöge auf den Thron zu Prag", in *Aspekte der Nationenbildung im Mittelalter*, Nationes 1 (Sigmaringen, 1978), pp. 439–463, p. 449ff.

<sup>400</sup> *De 'Vita Heinrici II imperatoris'*, p. 92, (c. 45).

<sup>401</sup> Thietmar, p. 279 (5,19); see also: *Dudonis sancti Quintini*, p. 197, (3,53); Bezzola, *Das Ottonische Kaisertum*, p. 186.

the roads connecting Saxony with Poland and Bohemia stretched across their territories.

In fact the dispute was resolved in a compromise and the territories over which Boleslav wanted personal control ended up being divided between himself and Guncelin, a man close to the Piast ruler.<sup>402</sup> Both the quoted sources stress the fact that Boleslav Chrobry swore his fealty to the monarch.<sup>403</sup> Thietmar goes on to add that the Polish duke received generous gifts from the German ruler, and had likely also offered appropriate gifts himself,<sup>404</sup> and was granted permission to depart,<sup>405</sup> a formality always respected in the course of congresses between members of aristocracy and a monarch.<sup>406</sup> The direct meeting of the Polish duke with the German king was thus ended in due observance of the applicable protocol. Therefore Adalbold, being a representative of the court circles, does not note any actual disagreement between Boleslav Chrobry and Henry II in Merseburg.

Admittedly, it seems that up to that point, despite certain controversies concerning Meissen, the relations between the two rulers were, at least on the official plane, fairly appropriate. Only after the incident which occurred while the Piast's retinue were leaving Merseburg, did the mutual relations significantly deteriorate. Alternatively, it may have constituted a catalyst through which the already existing animosities manifested themselves.

### 2.3.2 *The Attack on Boleslav Chrobry in the Structure of Thietmar's Narration*

The bishop of Merseburg was rather laconic in his depiction of the assault on the Polish duke. In fact, the account was so vague that we know neither who the attackers were or what exactly happened during the incident. To quote the chronicle's exact words:

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<sup>402</sup> Failed bargaining over ranks and offices—even though the king's negative decision did not raise anybody's prestige—was not that unusual—it rarely ended with rebellions: Gerd Althoff, "Königsherrschaft und Konfliktbewältigung im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert", *FMS* 23 (1989), 265–290, p. 268f; Herbert Ludat, "Reichspolitik und Piastenstaat um die Jahrhundertwende", *Saeculum* 14 (1963), 325–339, p. 335ff.

<sup>403</sup> Which equalled remaining in the circle of the people favoured by the monarch—Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik*, p. 203 *passim*.

<sup>404</sup> It was obvious for the contemporaries that a gift required reciprocation: Jürgen Hannig, "Ars donandi. Zur Ökonomie des Schenkens im früheren Mittelalter", *Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* 37 (1986), 149–162.

<sup>405</sup> *licencia regis*—Thietmar, p. 275 (5,18).

<sup>406</sup> Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik*, p. 207, note 28.

[Henry of Schweinfurt] As he prepared to escort Boleslav, departing well rewarded and with the king's permission, he saw an armed multitude gathering and moving to attack them. May God be my witness, this was without the involvement or knowledge of the king! When he wanted to discover the cause of this great tumult, and resolve it so that more damage might not arise, he was barely able to get away and lead his companion out by breaking through the exterior door. Out of his entourage, some warriors were plundered by the surging mob while others though severely wounded escaped death with the help of Duke Bernhard.<sup>407</sup> Because they had entered the royal court<sup>408</sup> armed and refused to leave when ordered, the penalty they paid was justified by their own offence. Boleslav saw this as part of an evil plot and, deeply disturbed, blamed the king although unjustly.<sup>409</sup>

Notably, the account clearly states that the assault took place outside the city walls i.e. not within the *curia regis*.<sup>410</sup> The highly restrictive rules on drawing weapons which were enforced within the king's actual residence, did not apply outside it.<sup>411</sup> Moreover, the description makes it fairly evident that the attack was not merely an accidental scuffle, it must have been carefully prepared beforehand. The assailants had gathered a sizeable group of warriors and barred the gates to prevent their victims from fleeing. It would also seem that through some earlier occurrences, some sort of an attack on the Piast retinue was not entirely unexpected. The same could explain the presence of Boleslav Chrobry's supporters, Henry of Schweinfurt and duke Bernhard,

<sup>407</sup> Bernhard I, Duke of Saxony (973–1011).

<sup>408</sup> In this place the translation is not precise, *curia regia* meant not only 'the royal court', but also the space surrounding it, usually with the embankment, the enclosure, or even the inner stronghold (*Burg*); more on this see: Walter Schlesinger, "Merseburg", in *Deutsche Königspfalzen. Beiträge zu ihrer historischen und archäologischen Erforschung*, vol. 1 (Göttingen, 1963), pp. 158–206, p. 171; also: Peter Ramm, *Pfalz und Schloß zu Merseburg* (Merseburg, 1986), p. 13ff.

<sup>409</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 217; *Thietmar*, p. 275 (5,18): *Hunc Heinricus comes, nepos meus, oppido diligens, quocumque modo potuit, libenter et amabiliter eum adiuvabat. Quem cum bene muneratum et cum licentia regis abeuntem comitaretur, concurrentem vidit armatam multitudinem et, per Deum testor, absque regis consilio et conscientia adversus se insurgentem. Qui cum causam tanti tumultus investigare et, ne plus dampni oriretur, voluisset compescere, vix securus socium, fracta exteriori porta educit. De sequentibus autem admodum sauciati mortem Bernhardi ducis auxilio evaserunt. Hii namque curiam regiam armati intrantes et de hac exire iussi nolentes, culpa sua tale periculum merito sustinuerunt. Bolizalus autem, hoc factum esse dolo mali consilii autumans, gravi merore consumitur, regi, quod non promeruit, imputando.*

<sup>410</sup> Merseburg consisted of the royal castle/stronghold (*Curtis regia cum aedificis infra urbem*), the fortified town (*suburbium*) and the merchant town: Schlesinger, "Merseburg", p. 171.

<sup>411</sup> The so called 'peace' in the royal curia is of old origin: *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, MGH—Legum sectio 2: Capitularia, vol. 2, ed. Alfred Boretius (Hannoverae, 1890), pp. 371–375; see also: Willfried Hartmann, *Der Frieden im früheren Mittelalter*, Barsbüttel 1992.

at or near the site: one remained with the Piast and the other was ready to swiftly come to his aid.

The anxiety among Boleslav's supporters must have originated from an earlier incident in front of the royal palace when, as recounted by Thietmar, the guards refused to allow the Piast's armed retinue to enter the parting audience with the monarch. The chronicle states that the duke and his men were very insistent on retaining their weapons. However, the fact that Boleslav was granted permission to depart and received gifts from the king seems to indicate that the king eventually decided to see with the duke and his entourage, and the matter was resolved amicably. The anger so evidently looming beneath Thietmar's words, one that he shared with the assailants, seems to suggest that the resolution was not to their satisfaction.

The behaviour of Boleslav's entourage is often interpreted by Polish historian as proof of their fears of a possible attack.<sup>412</sup> The fact of the matter is, however, that the very limited number of soldiers accompanying the Piast—most of his people were camped outside the keep—would not have been able to fend off an assault should the German monarch's guard decide to attack them. Although the above interpretation can hardly be treated as improbable: the warrior ethos demanded that one continued fighting even in the most hopeless of situations, over possible explanations should also be taken into account.

An attempt to penetrate the meaning of the events merely sketched out by Thietmar requires a more in-depth consideration that would reach beyond the simple association between weapons and combat. We know that weapons were treated as more than merely means of killing, they constituted a symbol of a warrior's status and privileged position. And the Piast's retinue, as the chronicler himself admits, was indeed very presentable, as befitted men about to be admitted in front of a monarch, and as such were likely to inspire an attempted robbery.<sup>413</sup> Knut Görich suggests that having his retinue so finely dressed was for Boleslav Chrobry an opportunity to emphasize his own status, which some of the Saxon lords may have seen as overly daring. The situation resulted in frictions and eventually in the physical assault on the Piast's men.<sup>414</sup> One has to agree that the elites had always competed among each other in terms of the quality of clothing and equipment of their entourages. What remains open for interpretation, however, is the underlying meaning

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<sup>412</sup> Grabski, *Boleslaw Chrobry*, p. 126.

<sup>413</sup> The similar situation—*Dudonis sancti Quintini*, p. 197 (c. 3.53).

<sup>414</sup> Görich, "Eine Wende im Osten", p. 119ff.

of Boleslav's refusal to allow his men to be disarmed by the guards as well as the reasons for the demands to have been imposed in the first place. Both sides of the dispute in front of the Merseburg palace can be assumed to have pursued a certain demonstration or an attempt to convey a certain message through deliberate gestures and behaviour.<sup>415</sup>

If we were to accept Thietmar's claims that the Polish duke's men were obliged to unconditionally surrender their weapons before entering the palace halls, Boleslav Chrobry's obstinacy would have to be seen as not only pointless but also very arrogant. However, the suggestion that the Polish delegates were unaware of the court protocol must be rejected as highly unlikely. We do know, after all, that by that time Polish rulers had been regularly visiting the Ottonians for approximately twenty years. One has to also consider the question of whether a duke visiting a foreign ruler would indeed choose to so ostentatiously transgress his host's code of conduct. Another evidence forcing us to question the chronicler's words can be found in the apparent support that the Piast received from Bernhard, the formal host of the Merseburg ceremony.<sup>416</sup> Clearly, Boleslav's behaviour could not have been so entirely uncalled for.

The particulars of court culture in those days have not been comprehensively defined to date.<sup>417</sup> Moreover, Henry II's rule was a period that saw significant changes in the protocol of handling weapons in the monarch's presence, such as the idea of the so called "peace and truce of God"<sup>418</sup> and other newly emerging notions.<sup>419</sup> Nonetheless, even considering these reservations, we may attempt to formulate several generalized observations on the above.

There is ample evidence to verify that engaging in combat within the *curia regis* had been strictly forbidden for many years before the events in ques-

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<sup>415</sup> On ostentation in the life of mediaeval society: Gerd Althoff, "Zur Bedeutung symbolischer Kommunikation für das Verständnis des Mittelalters", *FMS* 31 (1997), 370–389, p. 373ff.; Keller, "Ritual, Symbolik und", p. 24ff.

<sup>416</sup> Bernhard was in a quite ambiguous position here. After all, he had supported Ekkehard as a candidate for the German throne—Goetz, "Das Herzogtum der Billunger", p. 180ff.

<sup>417</sup> Gerd Althoff, "Demonstration und Inszenierung. Spielregeln der Kommunikation in mittelalterlicher Öffentlichkeit", *FMS* 27 (1993), 27–50, p. 46—he writes that attending a courtly holiday with a big retinue (even 1500 horsemen) was considered to be very chic; see also: Joachim Bumke, *Höfische Kultur. Literatur und Gesellschaft im hohen Mittelalter*, vol. 1 (München, 1986), p. 290ff., p. 297—the report on the arrival of the aristocrat at the courtly ceremony together with 100 warriors showing bare swords.

<sup>418</sup> Theodor Körner, *'Iuramentum' und frühe Friedensbewegung, 10.–12. Jh.* (Berlin, 1977).

<sup>419</sup> Reinhold Kaiser, "Selbsthilfe und Gewaltenmonopol. Königliche Friedenwahrung in Deutschland und Frankreich im Mittelalter", *FMS* 17 (1983), 54–72.

tion. However, there is nothing to suggest a general obligation to surrender one's arms to the guard.<sup>420</sup> Such measures would be employed in respect to simple subjects about to meet their monarch. Indeed such instances were often mentioned when open conflicts or other threats were expected: before a rally, during court sessions, or in other situations when clashing ambitions suggested the possibility of bloodshed.<sup>421</sup> Foreign envoys would also be required to surrender their arms before being allowed an audience.<sup>422</sup> In the case of visiting monarchs, however, even ones of unequal status, or eminent aristocrats, the situation would no longer be so clear-cut. In such instances, agreeing to surrender one's weapons would be equivalent to an act of unconditional submission and putting oneself at the mercy (almost in an act of *deditio*) of the host's guardsmen; or, in a reversed context: if one ceremonially handed over his sword, in doing so he appointed the recipient as his sword-bearer.<sup>423</sup> It should be added that befriended rulers connected by mutual allegiances would not demand the surrender of arms of each other—the ceremony of welcoming Otto III in the capital city of Gniezno involved, among other ceremonies, leading out hundreds, possibly thousands of armed warriors into the field to demonstrate the magnificence of their ranks in front of undoubtedly armed imperial retinue.<sup>424</sup>

An interesting example of customs related to bearing arms, and one that can prove particularly useful to us in our context, is given by Thietmar himself. In the course of the war between Poland and Bohemia, around the year 990, a group of German envoys comprising a number of eminent nobles, including margrave Ekkehard of Meissen, arrived at the court of the Premislid

<sup>420</sup> *Capitularia Regum Francorum*, p. 371ff. (no. 287).

<sup>421</sup> Rudolf His, *Das Strafrecht des deutschen Mittelalters*, vol. I (Leipzig, 1964), p. 215ff., 245ff.; Herman Conrad, "Rechtsordnung und Friedensidee im Mittelalter und in der frühen Neuzeit", in *Christliche Friede und Welfriede*, eds. Alexander Hollerbach, Manfred Abelein, (Paderborn, 1971), pp. 9–34.

<sup>422</sup> According to Dudo of St. Quentin, William, duke of Normandy, before his meeting with the German king handed over his sword to Conrad (Cono), who held it with the highest veneration and accompanied the guest—*Dudonis sancti Quintini*, p. 196, (3.52).

<sup>423</sup> Zbigniew Dalewski, "Kaiser Lothar III., Soběslav I. Von Böhmen und Bolesław III. Von Polen auf dem Hoftag in Merseburg im Jahre 1135", *Zeitschrift für Ostmitteleuropa-Forschung* 50 (2001), 317–336; see also: Burkhard Gladigow, "Die sakralen Funktionen der Likatoren. Zum Problem von institutioneller Macht und sakraler Präsentation", in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt. Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung*, eds. Wolfgang Haase, Hildegard Temporini, vol. 1.2 (Berlin – New York, 1972), pp. 295–314.

<sup>424</sup> *Galli Anonymi Cronica*, p. 18f. (c. 6); *Gesta principum Polonorum*, p. 34ff.; Banaszkiwicz, *Otton III jedzie do*, p. 300ff.; example of the treatment arms belonging to people visiting the monarch may serve some scenes from the so called Bayeux Tapestry, see: Grape, *The Bayeux Tapestry*, p. 100; p. 103; p. 141.



ruler. At that time, the empire was allied with Mieszko I, and Boleslav II of Bohemia decided to hold the envoys captive, meaning to use them as hostages. Most interestingly, although the German legates were initially stripped of their arms—after swearing an oath whose actual text is not known, yet one might venture a guess that it involved a promise to refrain from hostile acts and attempts to escape from the Bohemian camp—they were allowed to reclaim their weapons.<sup>425</sup> The permission to keep their swords was undoubtedly a form of recognising the high status of the imperial envoys.

Considering the above, it seems justified to interpret the demand to surrender the weapons by Bileslav Chrobry's retinue as an attempt to degrade his position, which constituted a contestation of the status enjoyed by the Piast within the system of power in the eastern part of the Ottonian empire. The behaviour of the king's men also signified a decision to cast aside the former familiarity between the Piast and Ottonian courts. We cannot know whether the incident in front of the Merseburg palace indeed had the German monarch's full consent. It is generally not uncommon for the entourage of a political persona to act of their own accord. Most often, however, the members of the court try in such situations to satisfy the wishes of their liege, even if said wishes remain unspoken. The ceremony in the curia was directly supervised by count Esiko, the administrator of the castle and Henry II's confidant. The ceremonial clearance for departure, necessary before the congress could be formally concluded,<sup>426</sup> likely took place either in the palace hall or outside the building—as can be surmised on the bases of known analogies.

The event itself must have been observed by scores of people from all the retinues accompanying the lords gathered in Merseburg. Therefore, assuming any randomness in the course of the ceremony would be farfetched to say the least, both sides treated it as a deliberate spectacle.<sup>427</sup> The Polish ruler would not have been the only lord being cleared for departure and one could assume his determination in this context was due to his refusal to be treated differently from the other gathered lords, e.g. Bernhard, the duke of Saxony.

The possibility of the provocation having been instigated by Esiko cannot be excluded, its aim being to reduce Boleslav Chrobry to the treatment of a lower rank subject of the king. What is significant, however, is that even if

<sup>425</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 161ff. (4.12).

<sup>426</sup> Althoff, *Spielregeln der Politik*, p. 207, note 28.

<sup>427</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 263f. (5,10)—see also: Karl Leyser, "Ritual, Zeremonie und Gestik: das ottonische Reich", *FMS* 27 (1993), 1–26, p. 19f.

Henry II had not been aware of the plans beforehand, his subsequent actions seem to suggest that he eventually accepted the solution offered to him by the Piast's enemies.

On arriving to the palace courtyard, Boleslav faced a particularly difficult situation. It seems unlikely that he should wish to inspire Henry II's hostility. After all, Piast politics so far had thrived on close cooperation with the empire. Nonetheless, submitting to the palace guard's demands would be synonymous with a ceremonial degradation of his status, which in those days would be, at least to a certain extent, treated as dishonourable. Therefore, Boleslav, possibly with Bernhard's support, insisted on being admitted to face the German monarch on a par with the other lords. In doing so he achieved a moral victory over his rivals, which in consequence forced them to take more drastic measures—attack him outside the *curia regis* where the principle of peace and truce no longer applied.<sup>428</sup>

### 2.3.3 *Reasons for Breaking the Alliance between Henry II and Boleslav Chrobry and the Alleged Instigators of the Attack on the Piast Retinue*

It is evident that Boleslav's conduct following the incident in Merseburg was marked by strong emotions. Already on his way home from the congress, he seized and burnt down the burg of Strehla which belonged to count Herman, Ekkehard's son.<sup>429</sup> His actions would have been completely illogical unless the Saxon lord had severely angered the Piast in the course of the events in Merseburg. Whether Herman had indeed participated in the attempt on the Polish duke's life remains uncertain, one can only assume that Boleslav blamed his son-in-law for his failure to stand by his side or his tardiness in doing so.

Thietmar adds that shortly after the incident, Boleslav would send out his agents with the task of stirring up open opposition against Henry II. The reason, according to the chronicler, was his belief that the kind had deliberately instigated the assault and attempt on his life.<sup>430</sup>

It should be considered at this point, at least as far as the available sources allow it, whether indeed there were motives that could inspire the German monarch to plan an assassination attempt against Boleslav, and whether such an act would fall in the general pattern of the king's documented conduct.

<sup>428</sup> Brunner, *Deutsche Rechtgeschichte*, vol. 2, p. 59ff.

<sup>429</sup> Thietmar, p. 277 (5,18); Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von*, p. 108.

<sup>430</sup> Thietmar, p. 275 (5,18).

Before being crowned as king in 1002, Henry II had ample opportunity to learn the art of nearly independent rule. After his father, Henry the Wrangler's death in 995, he inherited the lordship of Bavaria, which at that time enjoyed the status of a nearly sovereign state merely confederated with the Ottonian empire. Aside from the obligation to obey the king in matters of international policies and aiding his war efforts, the dukes of Bavaria could boast practically unrestricted independence, also in terms of managing the local Church and appointing the archbishop of Salzburg as well as local bishops and abbots. Their prerogative to control Church administration was consistently exercised and any attempts the hierarchy might have made to resist met with ruthless countermeasures.<sup>431</sup> In effect, Church officials soon became the mainstay of the rulers' local authority. The dukes also found themselves in a highly privileged position in their relations with the secular lords of Bavaria, partially due to the fact that their house was a branch of the Ottonian dynasty which had ruled Germany since 919.

Henry the Wrangler's strong position in Bavaria had not even suffered significantly after the lost wars against Otto II, in the aftermath of which, if only temporarily, he lost his throne in 976. Yet, on returning to power in 989, he was able to rebuild his authority in the course of his ten year reign and leave a strong and consolidated domain to his son.<sup>432</sup>

The line of Bavarian dukes cultivated the tradition of being the direct descendants of Henry I, the founder of the Ottonian dynasty<sup>433</sup>—it is assumed that their hopes and aspirations to gain power over the whole of the state had stemmed from this very fact.<sup>434</sup> Their ambitions were further strengthened by the fact that Henry (Henry II's grandfather) was born after his father had already gained the crown,<sup>435</sup> unlike his older brother—Otto I, the progenitor of the Saxon line, who was born before Henry I had actually ascended to the throne.<sup>436</sup>

When in 936 the principle of seniority proved more valid, Henry—admittedly only after being defeated in the field—was forced to make do with Bavaria and a status only nearly that of a king. Young Henry II was report-

<sup>431</sup> Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, p. 18; Weinfurter, "Die Zentralisierung der Herrschaftsgewalt", p. 249ff.

<sup>432</sup> Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, p. 21.

<sup>433</sup> Henry was the paternal great grandson of king Henry I (919–936).

<sup>434</sup> Weinfurter, "Die Zentralisierung der Herrschaftsgewalt", p. 265f.

<sup>435</sup> Weinfurter, "Idee und Funktion", p. 108; Weinfurter, *Heinrich II.*, p. 14.

<sup>436</sup> Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, p. 14f.; Lutger Körntgen, *Königsherrschaft und Gottes Gnade. zu Kontext und Funktion sakraler Vorstellungen in Historiographie und Bildzeugnissen der ottonisch-frühsalischen Zeit* (Berlin, 2001), p. 115ff.

edly brought up with the notion that his family had suffered a great injustice, which could have, at least to some extent, influenced his actions when the opportunity to seize the throne presented itself. In his struggle to gain power over all the state he spared no energy or resources and strove towards his goals by fair means or foul. It would seem that this kind of ruthlessness was characteristic of most of his time in power.

When Otto III died in January 1002 at the castle of Paterno, Italy, he left no heir and the matter of succession was somewhat ambiguous. The deceased king had been only 21 years old. Several lords aspired to the throne—all of them relatives of Otto III. The most eminent candidates were: Henry—the duke of Bavaria, Ekkehard—the margrave of Meissen, also the duke of Thuringia,<sup>437</sup> whose male line also traced back to the Liudolfings, although not to Henry but an earlier, pre-royal branch of the family tree,<sup>438</sup> and Herman II, the duke of Swabia and Alsace, related to the Liudolfings only on the distaff side, but directly to Otto I.<sup>439</sup>

The duke of Bavaria proved the most efficient in his efforts, securing the support of a number of lords (also Saxon),<sup>440</sup> particularly Otto, the duke of Carinthia, who was himself, by his mother, a grandson of Otto I. The convenient location of his lands was also of significant help to Henry. The main route from Italy to Germany ran across Bavaria and the convoy transporting the body of Otto III—whose dying wish was to be buried in the Aachen palace church, next to Charles the Great whom he greatly admired—had no choice but to pass through Henry's domain. The duke ceremoniously welcomed the convoy and treated its members with great reverence. Seizing the opportunity, Henry went to great lengths to convince archbishop Heribert of Cologne, who was leading the escort of Otto III's body, as well as other nobles, to support his candidacy to the throne.<sup>441</sup> Most of the members of the procession, however, their sympathies resting with Herman II of Swabia, refused and explained that the matter should not be taken up before the

<sup>437</sup> Thietmar, p. 257 (5,7); Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von*, p. 162f.

<sup>438</sup> Eduard Hlawitschka, *Untersuchungen zu den Thronwechseln der ersten Hälfte des 11. Jahrhunderts. Zugleich klärende Forschungen um 'Kuno von Öhningen*, VuF, Sonderband 35 (Sigmaringen, 1987); Gerd Althoff, "Die Thronbewerber von 1002 und ihre Verwandtschaft mit den Ottonen. Bemerkungen z einem neuen Buch", *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 137 (1989), 453–459; and: Eduard Hlawitschka, "Noch einmal zu den Thronbewerbern des Jahres 1002", *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 137 (1989), 460–467.

<sup>439</sup> Armin Wolf, "Quasi hereditatem inter filios. Zur Kontroverse über das Königswahlrecht im Jahre 1002 und die Genealogie der Konradiner", *ZRG Germ. Abt.* 112 (1995), 64–157.

<sup>440</sup> Thietmar, p. 213 (4,49); p. 253 (5,3).

<sup>441</sup> *De 'Vita Heinrici II imperatoris'*, p. 50, (c. 3); "Adalbold von Utrecht", p. 152; Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, p. 38f.

actual election.<sup>442</sup> In response, Henry seized the dead emperor's coffin and tried to do the same with the royal insignia which were in the temporary care of the already mentioned Heribert, the imperial archchancellor.<sup>443</sup> But the metropolitan was far-sighted enough to have secretly sent the most important of the regalia, the sacred spear, outside Bavaria.<sup>444</sup> With his characteristic unscrupulousness, Henry reacted by arresting the archbishop and agreeing to release him only after Heribert returned the imperial spear to him and agreed to leave his own brother, bishop Henry of Würzburg, as hostage to ensure the metropolitan of Cologne's neutrality during the decisive part of the race to the throne which was about to begin.<sup>445</sup> The dead emperor's body would also play a part in the power struggle. The Bavarian kept it with him and only through persistent mediation of his brother-in-law, Henry of Luxemburg, did he eventually agree to return it to Aachen for interment. At the same time, however, all these acts of violence were accompanied by the Bavarian's ostentatiously displayed respect for the late ruler: Henry would publicly join the procession carrying the coffin,<sup>446</sup> Otto III's intestines were ceremoniously and with great splendour buried in Augsburg, and a small fortune was offered to the monastery of St Afra in exchange for prayers on behalf of the late emperor's soul.

Meanwhile, at the royal castle of Frohse in Saxony, in march of 1002, the local lords, having been informed of Otto III's death, gathered to discuss the succession.<sup>447</sup> It was then that margrave Ekkehard of Meissen, officially put forward his candidacy. He had the support of Bernhard of Saxony (whose sister Swanhild was married to the margrave) and Gero II, margrave of the eastern march and Ekkehard's stepson.<sup>448</sup> Other strong supporters of the Meissen lord included two bishops: Bernward of Hildesheim and Arnulf of Halberstadt. On the opposing side, one of his greatest opponents was Liuthar,

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<sup>442</sup> Thietmar, p. 215 (4,50).

<sup>443</sup> Heribert Müller, "Heribert, Kanzler Ottos III. Und Erzbischof von Köln", *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 60 (1996), 16–64.

<sup>444</sup> Thietmar, p. 215 (4,50); see also: Wolf, "Die Heilige Lanze, Erzbischof", p. 23ff.

<sup>445</sup> Thietmar, p. 215, (4,50); Landbert von Deutz, *Vita Heriberti, Miracula Heriberti, Gedichte, Liturgische Texte*, ed. Bernhard Vogel, MGH SS RG 73 (Hannover, 2001), p. 162f.

<sup>446</sup> *De Vita Heinrici II. iperatoris*, pp. 48–50, (c. 3); "Adalbold von Utrecht", p. 152, more on this: Stephan Freund, "Kommunikation in der Herrschaft Heinrich II.", *Zeitschrift für bayerische Landesgeschichte* 66 (2003), 1–32, p. 3.

<sup>447</sup> Thietmar, p. 215f. (4,50).

<sup>448</sup> Schölkopf, *Die sächsischen Grafen*, p. 45.

the margrave of the northern march, still offended by the manner in which his son's engagement to Ekkehard's daughter had been broken off.<sup>449</sup>

Liuthar managed to convince Giseler, the archbishop of Magdeburg, (a former supporter of Herman of Swabia) and other lords to hold off the election of the new king until the following month. It was then that during a public confrontation of the two nobles, Liuthar spoke to Ekkehard dismissing his claims in the famous words, broadly discussed due to their ambiguity: *Indeed, have you not noticed that your cart lacks its fourth wheel.*<sup>450</sup> The margrave of the northern march acted without hesitation. The very same month he arrived at the court of Henry of Bavaria, accompanied by his uncle Rikbert whom the emperor had once ousted from his lands, thus making him an enemy of Otto III and his party.<sup>451</sup> In Bamberg, Liuthar ensured the Bavarian duke of his and his followers' support, and used this opportunity—with the help of his nephew, Henry of Schweinfurt—to gain Henry's promise that once the Bavarian gained the throne, the margrave's domain would not be diminished, indeed his fief would be extended.<sup>452</sup> Following Liuthar's advice, the Bavarian dispatched one of his trusted men to speak to the nobles gathered in Werla where the sisters of the late emperor, Sophia and Adelheid, were also present. Henry's envoy was to convince them of his master's rights to the throne.<sup>453</sup> The mission was successful, mainly owing to the support of Otto III's sisters who had been Henry's sympathizers for some time,<sup>454</sup> as well as to the behind-the-scenes influence of Willigis, the archbishop of Mainz.<sup>455</sup>

<sup>449</sup> *Thietmar*, pp. 195–199 (4.40–42); David A. Warner, "Thietmar of Merseburg on Rituals of Kingship", *Viator* 26 (1995), 53–76, p. 69.

<sup>450</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 189 (4,52). This sentence was much commented upon by historians, see e.g.: Borawska, "Margrabia Miśni Ekkehard", pp. 933–949; Hlawitschka, "'Merkst Du nicht, daß'", pp. 281–311; see also: Armin Wolf, "Königskandidatur und Königsverwandtschaft. Hermann von Schwaben als Prüfstein für das 'Prinzip der freien Wahl'", *DA* 47 (1991), 45–117, p. 95f.; Hlawitschka, *Untersuchungen zu den Thronwechselln*, p. 21f.

<sup>451</sup> This suggests the participation of this aristocrat and Liuthar himself in the conspiracy, mentioned by Thietmar, against Otto III—*Thietmar*, p. 213, (4.49)—does not notice the problem: Erkens, "Fürstliche Opposition in ottonisch", p. 346; Knut Görich, *Otto III., Romanus Saxonicus et Italicus. Kaiserliche Rompolitik und sächsische Historiographie*, (Sigmaringen, 1993), pp. 146–176: also includes in this group the counts of Katlenburg—so the conspirators were among Thietmar's relatives, thus their names were not mentioned by the chronicler.

<sup>452</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 251ff. (5,3).

<sup>453</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 253 (5,4); Leyser, *Rule and Conflict*, p. 82ff. but also: *ibid.*, p. 57ff.

<sup>454</sup> Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, p. 19.

<sup>455</sup> Werner Goetz, "Leben und Werk des heiligen Willigis", in *1000 Jahre St. Stephan in Mainz. Festschrift*, ed. Helmut Hinkel (Mainz, 1990), pp. 15–32, p. 25f.; Heinrich Büttner, *Zur frühmittelalterlichen Reichsgeschichte an Rhein, Main und Neckar*, ed. Alois Gerlich (Darmstadt, 1975), pp. 301–313, p. 311f. (especially).

Disappointed, Ekkehard refused to accept their decision. Instead, he chose to manifest his royal aspirations in a way which simultaneously affronted the imperial sisters: together with his supporters, duke Bernhard and bishop Arnulf of Halberstadt, he went on to dine at the royal palace taking the seats conventionally reserved for Sophia and Adelheid.<sup>456</sup> However, the demonstration failed to improve the margrave's standing, while at the same time it discouraged many of those not accustomed to disrespecting members of the ruling dynasty in such manner.

Rejected by the Saxons and somewhat confused, Ekkehard travelled to Hildesheim, accompanied by bishop Bernward, and was welcomed there as a monarch. Nonetheless, entering the king's city in a manner stylized to evoke a monarch's *adventus*, was nothing more than an empty gesture at that point as the number of his supporters was declining rapidly. Consequently, he was welcomed with cold reserve in Panderborn and was only allowed inside the city through the influence of Rether, the local bishop who was incidentally also rather unconvinced by the margrave's monarchical aspirations.<sup>457</sup>

The only way out of this critical situation would be for Ekkehard to form an alliance with another of the Bavarian's opponents, Herman II. By that time, his position had grown far stronger than that of the margrave of Meissen. A significant number of west German nobles attending the funeral of Otto III in Aachen in 1002 had declared their support for the duke of Swabia. The only reason Herman was not crowned on that very occasion, which would most likely seal his victory over the competitors, was the fact that Henry had managed to secure the neutrality of the Church superior of Aachen and one of the patriarchs entitled to crown monarchs,<sup>458</sup> namely archbishop Heribert whose brother—as we remember—was being held hostage by the Bavarian.

Ekkehard thus attempted to reach Duisburg to meet with Herman, but as it turned out he would not reach his destination.<sup>459</sup> Stranded in the western frontier of Saxony, separated from his ever diminishing group of supporters and his potential allies in Swabia, Ekkehard was fast becoming an easy target for attack by one of his enemies. Already during his stay in Northeim with

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<sup>456</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 253 (5,4). More on such type of behaviour: Althoff, "Das Bett des Königs", p. 141ff.; see also: Gunther Wolf, "Prinzessin Sophia (978–1039), Äbtissin von Gandersheim und Essen, Enkelin, Tochter und Schwester von Kaisern", *Niedersächsisches Jahrbuch für Landesgeschichte* 61 (1989), 105–123.

<sup>457</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 253, (5,4).

<sup>458</sup> Egon Boshof, Köln, "Mainz, Trier—Die Auseinandersetzung um die Spitzenstellung im deutschen Episkopat in ottonisch-salischer Zeit", *Jahrbuch des Kölnischer Geschichtsvereins* (1978), 19–48.

<sup>459</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 255 (5,5).

Siegfried, one of his former allies, he only barely escaped an assassination plot instigated by his host's sons, after being warned by the count's wife, Ethelyn.<sup>460</sup> On April 30th 1002 in Pöhlde, however, his tired and disheartened retinue were unable to mobilize fast enough to fend off yet another attack. Siegfried and Benno (sons of Siegfried of Northeim) and their uncles Henry and Udo (counts of Katlenburg) led their men to a charge on the building occupied by the margrave and his closest entourage. After a fierce fight, Ekkehard and his companions were killed, while the rest of his retinue remained indifferent.<sup>461</sup>

The actual reasons behind this attack remain unknown. Thietmar, when considering the same problem, suggested privately motivated retribution.<sup>462</sup> Some researchers have questioned the belief that the attackers acted on their own behalf and Henry of Bavaria has often been indicated as the player benefiting most from Ekkehard's death.<sup>463</sup> Armin Wolf has recently attempted to prove that the senior of the Northeim line, Siegfried, was in fact a brother of Cunegunde, Henry's wife—the assailants would then have been the queen's own nephews.<sup>464</sup> The latter is not certain, although there are many traces that seem to support the thesis. However, the German researcher does not believe Henry II to have been responsible for the murder; quite the contrary, he claims that the monarch knew nothing of the planned assault. Much alike, we might add, the later attack on Boleslav Chrobry. Although Wolf cannot back his claims with indisputable evidence, he refers to a number of facts confirming that the assailants were not in any way rewarded for their act, in fact one of them—despite his high connections—soon found himself in the king's disfavour. As early as in 1003, Siegfried of Northeim the younger reappeared in the camp of Henry of Schweinfurt who had at that time rebelled against Henry II.<sup>465</sup>

Ekkehard's death led to a considerable reshuffle on the German political scene. Finally unthreatened from the east, the duke of Bavaria could now focus his energy on his offensive against Herman II. After a bold distracting ploy, the Bavarian managed to outmanoeuvre the forces guarding the Rhine crossing and marched to Mainz. This success practically concluded

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<sup>460</sup> Thietmar, p. 253f. (5,5).

<sup>461</sup> Thietmar, p. 255 (5,6).

<sup>462</sup> Thietmar, p. 257 (5,7).

<sup>463</sup> Grabski, *Boleslaw Chrobry*, p. 126.

<sup>464</sup> Wolf, "Die Herkunft der Grafen", pp. 427–440; Richard G. Hucce, *Die Grafen von Stade, 900–1144. Genealogie, politische Stellung, Comitatus und Allodialbesitz der sächsischen Udonen*, Einzelschriften des Stader Geschichts- und Heimatvereins 8 (Stade, 1956), p. 17f.

<sup>465</sup> Wolf, "Die Herkunft der Grafen", p. 438.



the struggle against Herman. On June 6th 1002, archbishop Willigis crowned Henry as the king of Germany. Lords of Bavaria, Franconia and the Mosel region paid homage to the new ruler.<sup>466</sup>

Still, Herman II refused to accept defeat and yield to his opponent. Therefore, the next step of the newly anointed king was, in June of the same year, to launch an attack on his adversary's homeland—Swabia. Herman, however, managed to manoeuvre the king's troops into lengthy and gruelling combat, allowing himself to attack Strasbourg and the city's bishop Wizelin, a supporter of Henry II's, which forced the king's forces to remain in the west far longer than intended.<sup>467</sup>

The monarch let himself be distracted from the conflict with the duke of Swabia only for a brief period of time necessary to travel to Merseburg in July and secure his authority in Saxony.<sup>468</sup> It was not until the end of 1002 that, after a lengthy campaign, Herman was finally defeated and forced to humble himself before the king, resigning a significant part of his fortune and many of his ducal privileges.<sup>469</sup>

While the struggle continued in the west, the eastern part of the country was also the stage for important events. The news of Ekkehard's death encouraged Boleslav Chrobry to take rather unexpected steps. These events were naturally described by Thietmar, although as is typical of the author, while some of their aspects are shown in great detail, others remain quite enigmatic.

The chronicler's account of the Polish ruler's actions—placed almost immediately after the rather pompous sequence describing Ekkehard's proud and courageous bearing in the face of numerous adversaries—begins with a comment that Boleslav was greatly pleased to hear of the margrave's death.<sup>470</sup> The words were meant as an accusation, as it was common knowledge that the Piast and the lord of Meissen were under a pact of the so called *amicitia*, which obliged them to show each other nothing but friendship, loyalty and mutual support.<sup>471</sup> The author goes on to suggest that the joy of the “perfidious” Piast was due to the fact that with Ekkehard gone, he could

<sup>466</sup> Thietmar, p. 265ff. (5,11); Büttner, *Zur frühmittelalterlichen Reichsgeschichte*, p. 311; *Regesta Imperii*, 2, Abt. 4, p. 863.

<sup>467</sup> Thietmar, p. 266, (5,12).

<sup>468</sup> *Regesta Imperii*, 2, Abt. 4, p. 867f.

<sup>469</sup> Weinfurter, “Der Anspruch Heinrichs II.,” p. 121f.; Lutger Körntgen, “*In primis Hermann ducis assensu*. Zur Funktion von D H II. 34 im Konflikt zwischen Heinrich II. und Hermann von Schwaben”, *FMS* 34 (2000), 159–185.

<sup>470</sup> Thietmar, p. 259 (5,9).

<sup>471</sup> See chapter 1.2.2 of this book.

finally implement his invasion plans against Germany. After this interlude, Thietmar describes details of the alleged annexation. And so, we read that in May 1002, Polish troops captured the whole of Lausitz as far as the river Elbe; i.e. occupying the entire right-bank part of Gero II's march.<sup>472</sup> Boleslav also captured Milzeni and Bautzen. Within this area, he acted in consultation and cooperation with count Guncelin, brother of the murdered margrave. Only Meissen attempted a more organised defence under the command of a certain Bezeko, a vassal of count Herman, Ekkehard's son. Eventually, as most of the defenders were out of the keep in search of horse fodder, the Slavic residents of the borough (so called Withasen)<sup>473</sup> and Germans led by Guncelin broke through the gate and entered the stronghold. Afterwards, the chronicler gives a curious account of an intriguing ceremony. As he entered Meissen, Boleslav was welcomed with celebration and applause. One does not necessarily have to read into this event a display of the townsfolk's Slavic solidarity with the Piast, as has been suggested by some researchers.<sup>474</sup> After all, the welcoming crowd comprised Slavs and Germans alike. In fact, the chronicler does disclose the fact that the highly meaningful entry ceremony was likely stylized after a royal *adventus*.<sup>475</sup> The source text makes it evident that the residents of Meissen, both Slavic and German, as well as Guncelin, the brother of margrave Ekkehard, the previous lord of the city, all recognised Boleslav as their new master. The ceremony of entering the city through the main gate along with the ritual joy of the residents, represented formal acclamation of the new ruler.

Such an interpretation of Thietmar's text does not seem too farfetched as Boleslav's aspirations towards the territory of Lausitz are also confirmed in the later section of the work.<sup>476</sup> As the chronicler informs us that the Piast conquered the land as far as the river Elbe, he also adds—with evident censure—that Saxon lords chose to submit themselves to him and paid him

<sup>472</sup> Thietmar, p. 259 (5,9).

<sup>473</sup> The 'Chronicon', p. 211 (5,9); Thietmar, p. 261, note. 58; see also: Christian Lübke, "Vethenici und Wettiner", *Beiträge zur Namenforschung* 21 (1986), 401–428.

<sup>474</sup> Andrzej F. Grabski, "Geneza wojen polsko-niemieckich na początku XI wieku", *Studia i materiały do historii wojskowości* 5 (1960), 458–476, p. 472ff.; Grabski, *Bolesław Chrobry*, p. 121.

<sup>475</sup> More on this ceremony: David A. Warner, "Ritual and Memory in the Ottonian Reich: The Ceremony of Adventus", *Speculum* 76 (2001), 278–281; Winfried Dotzauer, "Der fürstliche 'Einzug' in die Stadt (bis zum Ende des Alten Reichs)", *AfK* 55 (1973), 245–288; Kantorowicz, *Selected Studies*, pp. 37–75; Dalewski, *Ritual and Politics*, p. 13ff.

<sup>476</sup> Korta, "Milsko i Łużyce", pp. 141–184.

homage.<sup>477</sup> Notably, we are informed that the campaign had in fact been consulted with the claimant to the throne, Henry of Bavaria. Although Thietmar states that Boleslav's declaration of having acted with the favour and permission of Duke Henry was just a deceit,<sup>478</sup> but this supposition simply cannot be true. Only several pages later, Thietmar himself reveals his insincerity in describing the Piast as he places him among eminent Saxon magnates welcoming Henry II in Merseburg. One can hardly believe the Polish ruler would calmly have approached the monarch seeking approval for his claims, had he only recently treacherously attacked and annexed German lands.

In fact, the bishop of Merseburg himself confirms that even before Ekkehard's eventual downfall, Henry II contacted Boleslav to convince him into abandoning the margrave's camp. Although the chronicler tried to deliberately complicate the matter in order to cover up the alliance between his ruler and the so despised Piast, a number of facts give away the actual truth of the events. One has to note that Boleslav was absent at the congresses in Frohse and later in Verla, where the margrave of Meissen attempted to advocate his candidacy to the German throne and where the Polish duke could, or even should have supported him with his presence and the promise of military aid—after all, cases of Slavic forces playing an active part in the German power struggles were not unheard of.<sup>479</sup> The Polish *amicus* was also not present during the final act of Ekkehard's life. But admittedly, he was not the only one. It seems that the entire circle of Saxon nobility ignored Ekkehard's aspirations almost unanimously, which meant that his cause had been doomed to failure from the very beginning.<sup>480</sup> Boleslav Chrobry—through his developed network of connections with east German nobility—must have realised that quite early on, and decided to follow the example of most magnates from his circles, i.e. initially remain neutral, later to side with Henry of Bavaria as the strongest candidate.

The future German ruler paid for the Piast's support with promises of land grants in the east (Meissen, Lausitz, Milzeni). Naturally, the grants would in no way mean the lands would cease being part of the Liudolfing state, they were simply to be passed under Boleslav's management. Notably, the accept-

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<sup>477</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 261ff. (5,10); more about chroniclers world view: Schneider, "Thietmar von Merseburg", pp. 34–71; Tyszkiewicz, "Wschodni sąsiedzi Niemiec", p. 8ff.

<sup>478</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 261ff. (5,10).

<sup>479</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 389 (5,51); Brüske, *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Lutizenbundes*, p. 70f.

<sup>480</sup> Hermann Dörries, "Heinrich II. und Sachsen", *Jahrbuch der Gesellschaft für niedersächsische Kirchengeschichte* 51 (1953), 16–34, p. 17; Wolfgang Giese, *Der Stamm der Sachsen und das Reich in ottonischer und salischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden, 1979), p. 26ff.

ance of the Piast's aspirations by the claimant to the throne would in fact result in granting Boleslav a status similar to that previously held by Ekkehard in the eastern expands of the empire.<sup>481</sup> The above was the underlying reason for claiming homage and authority over certain east German lords, unnamed by Thietmar,<sup>482</sup> as well as the duke of Bohemia, as confirmed by Adalbold.<sup>483</sup>

As observed by certain German researchers,<sup>484</sup> it seems that the Piast's claims concerning the lands by the Lusatian Neisse might not have necessarily been inspired solely by political concerns.<sup>485</sup> In fact it is highly plausible that Boleslav simply wanted to claim a portion of the bequeath left by his late father-in-law, duke Dobromir—particularly the lands that should fall to him through his marriage to Emnilde.<sup>486</sup> Henry II's decision in Merseburg would then in effect pertain to the distribution of an inheritance: left by Dobromir and Ekkehard, as the two were connected in some way, albeit unknown to us.<sup>487</sup> Thus it would seem that the king's settlement was more of personal and legal, rather than political nature, the latter being so eagerly referred to by researchers on the basis of Thietmar's account. They usually also seem not to notice, undoubtedly also through the insinuations of the Saxon chronicler, that in respect to Boleslav Chrobry's initial postulates, Henry II's changes were merely a matter of shifting emphasis: the Polish duke may not have

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<sup>481</sup> Ludat, *Słowianie—Niemcy—Europa*, p. 20. This was probably not about accepting the office of margrave, but about a kind of authority over the region of the Reich, received following the consent of the German monarch and confirmed by the homage. In practice, however, Boleslav the Brave, being in control of the old March of Meissen, could remain (in a sort of legacy from Ekkehard)—until his might was crushed by Henry II—Boleslav the Bohemian's superior, and this probably happened because of the fact of *amicitia* between them. It should be noted that the Bohemian aristocrats also perceived the Brave as their superior. It was he whom they asked for support against repression they suffered from Boleslav the Red. The Piast ruler also became the guarantor of an agreement reached between the Premyslid and the Bohemian aristocrats. However, when the Red found himself in breach of the pact, the Piast severely punished him, ousted from the throne, and ascended to his throne himself: Thietmar, p. 282f. (5,23); Barbara Krzemińska, "Kryze českého státu na přelomu tisíciletí", *Československý Časopis Historický* 17 (1970), 497–532.

<sup>482</sup> Thietmar, p. 263 (5,10). It seems that the authority of the Brave was in 1002 recognized by margrave Gero II, stepson of margrave Ekkehard, who was later harassed in different ways by Henry II—Thietmar, p. 393ff. (6,56); p. 491ff. (7,16).

<sup>483</sup> See chapter 2.1.2 of this book.

<sup>484</sup> Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder*, p. 26ff.

<sup>485</sup> Grabski, "Geneza wojen polsko-niemieckich", p. 471.

<sup>486</sup> Ludat, "Piastowie i Ekkehardynowie", p. 193f.

<sup>487</sup> There are speculations that between 984–985 Ekkehard received support of the Polish warriors in his fights against the Czechs—Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder*, p. 26f. *RGSEO*, 3., p. 40f. (no. 239); p. 47f. (no. 245); see also: Ludat, "Piastowie i Ekkehardynowie", p. 194f.

received the so desired Meissen but was granted the also important Bautzen; while the other part of Ekkehard's "Slavic" domain passed on to Guncelin.<sup>488</sup>

The claims of the late margrave's brother to the most important portion of his inheritance were in line with the old ancestral law, known in many archaic societies and commonly respected among Slavic communities of the period. The tradition was contradicted by newly emerging principles, according to which the property was to pass on to the offspring, particularly the firstborn son of the dead nobleman. Therefore, claims to Ekkehard's inheritance were most likely put forwards in Merseburg by Herman as well. The assumption seems justified in the light of his earlier actions; by manning the stronghold of Meissen with his own soldiers he was clearly trying to enforce the satisfaction of his own claims to the most valuable part of his late father's domain. Eventually, however, he lost the confrontation to his uncle supported by Boleslav Chrobry.

In Merseburg, Henry chose to adhere to the older, ancestral law and awarded the "Slavic" parts of Ekkehard's inheritance to Guncelin and Boleslav; the margrave's son received the "German" allodia.<sup>489</sup> From Henry II's perspective, and likely from what would be considered the objective perspective in those days, the above was a just and fair decision. A certain compromise was reached, which in its essential form lasted until 1009, despite the war that broke out between Henry II and Boleslav Chrobry.

The structure of mutual relations described above seems to have offered little incentive for the German monarch to instigate an attack on the Polish duke. The only viable reason for Henry's mistrust towards Boleslav Chrobry would be the fear that the duke—whom Henry of Schweinfurt publicly treated with great respect and "friendship"—would support the margrave's claims to the duchy of Bavaria, once promised to him but now denied, which could constitute a potential threat to the monarch in the face of the still ongoing conflict with Herman II.

Any absolute claims in this respect would seem somewhat farfetched. We do know that Henry II was characterised by authentic piety<sup>490</sup> and there is no evidence to suggest that he was overly bloodthirsty, although one could also hardly call him good-natured. A German researcher's concise description of the king's character read: *Henry was not a magnanimous man, he did*

<sup>488</sup> Perhaps he was also entitled to his share in the legacy from duke Dobromir—Ludat, "Piastowie i Ekkehardynowie", p. 194f.

<sup>489</sup> Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von*, p. 108.

<sup>490</sup> Werner Freitag, "Heinrich II.—ein Kaiser der letzter Tage? Ein Beitrag zur politischen Anthropologie", *Historische Anthropologie* 6 (1998), 217–241.

*not forgive*.<sup>491</sup> We can add that, if political interests demanded it, he could be truly ruthless.<sup>492</sup> We know that Henry II, particularly during the first ten years of his rule, with unyielding consistency implemented the method of government already practiced by him in Bavaria. With the aid of several Church officials, he extended the already considerable influence the monarch had over the Church, which ensured not only as ideological, but also financial support for the king's authority.<sup>493</sup> He also aimed to introduce a similar policy of an iron fist in his dealings with the secular lords, whose natural inclination had always been towards anarchy. The king worked painstakingly to anatomize the overly powerful local domains and ensure that no new ones were consolidated. It was due to this particular policy that he eventually declined Henry of Schweinfurt's claims to the duchy of Bavaria, despite having solemnly promised to grant it to him.<sup>494</sup> After all, the count was already holding vast allodia on the upper Main as well as the Bavarian northern march (Nordgau), which was at that time considered formally the property of his house.<sup>495</sup>

Henry II employed similar strategies in the western expands of his state. We know that even Duke Otto of Carinthia, heir to the eminent Conradine line, who offered his significant support in 1002, did not enjoy Henry's lasting gratitude. After securing his position on the throne, as early as in January 1003, the monarch opposed the duke's plans to marry his son, Conrad, with Mathilda, the daughter of Herman II of Swabia, claiming supposedly too close blood relation between them.<sup>496</sup> It has been suggested by various researchers that the actual reason was an attempt to divest the duke of a portion of his domain as the monarch feared the power of the lord so closely related to one of his old adversaries. Henry II's demands met with the opposition of archbishop Willigis and the king was eventually forced to withdraw. In another much discussed case, the king challenged yet another branch of

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<sup>491</sup> *Heinrich II. kannte keine Großmut, kein Verzeihen*—Müller, "Heribert, Kanzler Ottos III.," p. 18ff.; see also: Fried, *Der Weg in die Geschichte*, p. 623.

<sup>492</sup> Franz Staab, "Reich und Mittelrhein um 1000", in *1000 Jahre St. Stephan in Mainz, Festschrift*, Quellen und Abhandlungen der mittelrheinischen Kirchengeschichte 63, ed. Helmut Hinkel (Mainz, 1990), pp. 59–100, p. 75ff.

<sup>493</sup> Weinfurter, "Die Zentralisierung der Herrschaftsgewalt", pp. 241–297; see also: Stefan Weinfurter, "Kaiser Heinrich II. und Bolesław Chrobry: Herrscher mit ähnlichen Konzepten?", *Questiones Medii Aevi Novae* 9 (2004), pp. 5–25.

<sup>494</sup> Thietmar, p. 269 (5,14).

<sup>495</sup> Rudolf Enders, "Slawenmotiv bei der Gründung des Bistums Bamberg", *Bericht des Historischen Vereins Bamberg* 109 (1973), 161–180, p. 167f.; Alois Schmid, "Grafen von Schweinfurt", *LMA* vol. 7, p. 1641f.; Alois Schmid, "Nordgau", *LMA* vol. 6, p. 1235f.

<sup>496</sup> Staab, "Reich und Mittelrhein", p. 76.

the Conradine line. This time the monarch did not hesitate to employ the same claim of too close blood relationship between the spouses,<sup>497</sup> in order to legally separate a loving, over a dozen-year-old marriage between Otto of Hammerstein (one of the most eminent lords of Fraconia and Rhineland, the last adult agnate of king Conrad I: 911—919) and Irmigard, the daughter of the count of Verdun. Notably, at the time of the king's attack, the couple had already had a number of children. After years of court proceedings and open conflicts, despite resistance from a part of the episcopate and even a contradictory ruling by the pope, the monarch eventually succeeded: the marriage was cancelled, children disinherited, and in 1020, the castle Hammerstein, Otto's last bastion, passed on to king along with a considerable portion of the Conradine wealth.<sup>498</sup>

The quoted examples serve well to illustrate Henry II's ruthlessness and inspire a suspicion that the king's approval, possibly even inspiration of the attack on Boleslav Chrobry, was indeed possible. Moreover, some historiographers advocate the opinion that the potential cooperation between Henry and the Polish duke would have been greatly improbable due to the Piast's affiliation with the political camp of Otto III, whose ideas were later represented by Margrave Ekkehard, and which were definitively rejected by Henry of Bavaria.

The above suggestion is too vast and complex to be explored here. One only has to remember—as it will prove useful in our later deliberations—that the recent tendency has been to strongly and quite justifiably stress that the differences between Otto III and Henry II did not really lie in the fact that the latter utterly contested the political ideologies of the former.<sup>499</sup> The Bavarian also believed Rome to be important; however, the state he had come to rule was anarchized, her uniformity threatened by several overly independent provinces and the aspirations of other claimants to the throne. He had to act in Germany in order to secure his authority and thus, at least for the time being, forget about Italy. It was due to the different circumstances that evolved over the years and the ever changing political configurations he could not ignore that his rule adopted the character so different from

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<sup>497</sup> Johannes Fried, "Prolepsis oder Tod? Methodische und andere Bemerkungen zur Konradiner-Genealogie im 10. und frühen 11. Jahrhundert", in *Papstgeschichte und Landesgeschichte*, pp. 69–119, p. 72.

<sup>498</sup> Fried, "Prolepsis oder Tod", p. 71ff.; see also: Siegfried Reicke, "Der Hammersteiner Ehehandel im Lichte der mittelalterlichen Herrschaftsordnung", *Rheinische Vierteljahresblätter* 38 (1974), 203–224.

<sup>499</sup> Bernd Schneidmüller, "Otto III.—Heinrich II. Wende der Königsherrschaft oder Wende der Mediaevistik?" in *Otto III.—Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, pp. 9–46.

Otto III's brief reign. The situation forced him to focus his attention on the northern provinces of his domain.

One could also not say of Henry II that he would by principle attempt to remove all the supporters of his predecessor. Some members of Otto III's former faction retained their positions and eminence under the new ruler while others did not; but in the case of the later, it does not seem that their downfall was due merely to their membership in the so called "old elite". Henry II supported people compatible with his policy, and unless he had some unpleasant personal experiences in the past, he would not allow sentimentalism or personal antipathy to guide his hand. Moreover, it has to be stressed that there is no evidence to Henry II's particular aversion towards Otto III and his men in the first place. On the contrary, sources emphasize his loyalty towards the emperor, and even recount a sort of closeness in the relations between the last of the Liudolfings and the sisters of the dead emperor.<sup>500</sup>

We cannot automatically assume that Henry II, while contemplating a particular "shift in the elites" that had formed the basis for his predecessor's reign, would simply decide to utilise the events in Merseburg as a means of attacking Boleslav Chrobry, an undoubtedly strong link in the chain of nobles constituting Otto III's "party".

The thesis of the Polish duke's son-in-law, Herman being involved in the attempt on Boleslav's life is equally uncertain. The relation was suggested by Thietmar, who reported on the capture and burning of Strehla in Lausitz during the Piast's return march from the congress in Merseburg.<sup>501</sup> The burg, at that time already considered an allodium of the Ekkehardines,<sup>502</sup> eventually passed on to Herman in the spring of 1002.<sup>503</sup>

Several facts seem to support the existence of a certain tension between Boleslav and his future son-in-law.<sup>504</sup> We have already mentioned the clash with Herman's troops prior to the congress in Merseburg, while the Piast's

<sup>500</sup> Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, pp. 21, 51.

<sup>501</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 277 (5,18).

<sup>502</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 259 (5,9).

<sup>503</sup> After his marriage to Regelinda Herman granted to his wife the castle town of Strzala (Strehla)—most likely together with the whole borough—as the widow's allowance (*dos*)—which is confirmed by *Thietmar*, p. 301 (5,36), Boleslav the Brave's invading Lusatia took place in August 1003 and at that time he spared the castle town because it was held by the daughter—*RGSEO*, 3., p. 216f., no. 370; so the marital union was realized before this date, but certainly after the convention in Merseburg.

<sup>504</sup> Do not notice it: Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder*, p. 18ff.; but do it: Görich, "Eine Wende im Osten", p. 119; Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von*, p. 107f.



and Guncelin's forces were taking over Meissen in late April or early May of 1002.<sup>505</sup>

In Merseburg, Herman must have asserted his rights in opposition to Boleslav and Guncelin. Likely, some sort of a public argument took place. Such an assumption is justified considering the count's later, long-lasting efforts to regain Meissen, which eventually ended with his success. However, should Herman truly have been in some way involved in the assault, Boleslav, offended in his renowned pride, would hardly have been likely to so swiftly agree to the count's marriage to own daughter, Regelinde—after all the wedding took place either in late 1002 or early 1003.<sup>506</sup> It seems more likely that on his way from the congress, the Polish duke, infuriated by the attack, associated the assault with Herman's earlier opposition and initially blamed the count for the incident. Should this interpretation prove viable, and indeed we see no other way to understand the accounts in the source texts describing Boleslav Chrobry's and Herman's mutual relations, one would have to conclude that the Piast did not in fact know whose men had actually attacked him.<sup>507</sup>

However, once the initial anger had faded, the duke must have reviewed the matter more coldly and recognised Herman's innocence. Therefore, the marriage with Regelinde, possibly arranged earlier with Ekkehard himself, could have served as a means of appeasing the count and attracting him over to the duke's side. In the long run, however, the efforts proved only partially successful.

Boleslav Chrobry had never been a true enemy of Herman. At best, he sometimes happened to be an adversary, as the count's main competitor had always been Guncelin. Yet on the other hand, there also no accounts of any particular familiarity between the two men in later years.

When in the course of his war with Henry II the Polish ruler lost Milzeni in 1003, the authority over the keep was granted to Herman by the German ruler. It was an unmistakable expression of the monarch's trust, the king's plan likely being to additionally secure the Lausitzian border while Meissen remained in the hands of the far less reliable Guncelin.<sup>508</sup> It was not until

<sup>505</sup> Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder*, p. 121.

<sup>506</sup> Jasiński, *Rodowód Pierwszych Piastów*, p. 110f.

<sup>507</sup> This is likely because in Merseburg, being the centre of the so called Burgward, there were a number of warriors from different parts of the Reich—Gerhard Billig, *Die Burgwardorganisation im obersächsisch-meißnischen Raum. Archäologisch-archivalisch vergleichende Untersuchungen* (Berlin, 1989); Henry I allegedly gathered there even some criminals to support him with the fights against the Slavs (*Merseburger Lumpen*).

<sup>508</sup> Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von Meissen*, p. 110.

1007 that Boleslav Chrobry eventually managed to reclaim Milzeni from Herman by force of arms.<sup>509</sup>

The fairly close relations between the Ekkehard's son and Henry II, and the relative trust that the count enjoyed from the monarch, are evidenced by the fact that on several occasions he acted as the German king's emissary to Boleslav Chrobry.<sup>510</sup> The leniency towards Herman was not without limits, however, as can be seen in the ruler's reaction to his inflamed conflict with his uncle, which took place in 1009. In fact it was described as an open war within the family. Ekkehard II, the younger son of the great margrave, backed his brother in the struggle against Guncelin.<sup>511</sup> The count presented to Henry II, who acted as the arbiter in the conflict, fairly serious accusations against Guncelin, including those of aiding Boleslav Chrobry contrary to royal interests.<sup>512</sup> The king took the Meissen march from Guncelin and had the margrave imprisoned and put in the custody of bishop Arnulf of Halberstadt.<sup>513</sup> But rather than pass the territories in question over to Herman, he granted Meissen to Frederick Eilenburg<sup>514</sup> of the house of Wettin, a family traditionally in conflict with the Ekkehardines. It was only through Herman's continued efforts—he actually managed to reach the queen herself and sway to his side Tagino, the archbishop of Magdeburg—that the ruler finally changed his decision and allowed him to take over the much desired fief of Meissen.<sup>515</sup>

The available information on Herman and his relations with the father-in-law, although admittedly confirming a certain distance between the two men, gives no reason to suggest actual hostility. Herman was a guest to Boleslav's court on a number of occasions, which would probably rule out his participation in the planning or execution of the assault in Merseburg.

Thus, the only person of whose involvement in the attack on Boleslav Chrobry we may be fairly certain is Esiko, the count of Merseburg. What we do not know, however, is why he had decided to instigate the affair. Let us analyse in greater detail—as far as the available sources allow it—the count's life, hoping to find a clue that would shed some light on this issue.

<sup>509</sup> Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von Meißen*, pp. 112, 134f.

<sup>510</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 363 (6,33); p. 475 (7,9); p. 579 (8,1).

<sup>511</sup> Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von Meißen*, p. 104f.

<sup>512</sup> *RGSEO*, 3, p. 271, no. 420; *Thietmar*, p. 391 (6,54).

<sup>513</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 307f. (5,41); p. 395 (6,57); p. 409 (6,68).

<sup>514</sup> Franz Winter, "Der Sprengel von Merseburg und seine Grafschaften", *Archiv für sächsische Geschichte NF* 3 (1877), 105–140, p. 117f.

<sup>515</sup> Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von Meißen*, p. 111.

Esiko was the last of an important house of Saxony and Thuringia which that used to enjoy connections in the highest echelons of power.<sup>516</sup> It is believed that his grandfather was Siegfried, whom Widukind describes as the king's son-in-law (brother-in-law).<sup>517</sup> It is unclear whether the noble married the daughter or sister of Henry I.<sup>518</sup> Possibly due to the fact that the Bavarian branch of the Liudolfings held the first Saxon king in such high esteem and sought to legitimize their claims to the throne through him, the grandson of said Siegfried quickly rose to a position of eminence by the side of king Henry II and spent his last years standing closely behind the monarch's throne.

The earlier years of Esiko's life, however, had had their twists and turns as well. His past activities mentioned in the sources had usually been undertaken together with his brother Binizo (sometimes abbreviated to Bio).<sup>519</sup> The brothers' first political act of importance was participation in a congress of Saxon nobles held in Asselburg in 984, where the magnates declared their opposition to Henry the Wrangler and took the side of the young Otto III, his mother Theophanu, grandmother Adelheid, and archbishop Willigis of Mainz who supported them.<sup>520</sup> The involvement in the congress was not an expression of the two counts' particular political standpoint as they simply followed the example of the vast majority of Saxon nobility. Similar conclusions can be drawn concerning the next recorded public appearance of the brothers. In 990, they were mentioned among the Saxon nobles setting off, at Theophanu's orders, to the aid of Mieszko I against the armies of Boleslav II of Bohemia.<sup>521</sup> In this case their participation was in a way a confirmation of the counts' membership among the highest political elites of southern Saxony and Thuringia, i.e. the areas threatened by earlier military actions from Bohemia.

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<sup>516</sup> Schölkopf, *Die sächsischen Grafen*, p. 35ff.; about Esiko more: Heinrich Patze, *Die Entstehung der Landesherrschaft in Thüringen* (Köln, 1962), p. 97; Wenskus, *Sächsischer Stammesadel und*, pp. 385, 395f.; Reinhard Wenskus, "Der Hassegau und seine Grafschaften in ottonischer Zeit", in *Ausgewählte Aufsätze zum frühen preußischen Mittelalter. Festgabe zu seinem siebzigsten Geburtstag*, ed. Heinrich Patze (Sigmaringen, 1986), pp. 213–230, p. 223f.

<sup>517</sup> *gener quondam regis—Widukind*, p. 88, (2,2), p. 94 (2,9); differently: Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder*, (Stammtafel).

<sup>518</sup> Schölkopf, *Die sächsischen Grafen*, p. 36; Wenskus, *Der Hassegau und seine Grafschaften*, p. 220f.

<sup>519</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 135, (3,19).

<sup>520</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 149 (4,2).

<sup>521</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 158ff. (4,11–12).

Esiko's brother, Binizo, died probably in 991 or 992.<sup>522</sup> It seems that he did not leave a son, as his lands located between the rivers Wipper, Saale and Wilderbarch passed on to Dedi (brother of the already mentioned Frederick of Eilenburg) of the house of Wettin. We do not know the reasons behind such a decision. In Germany of the day, royal fiefs usually passed down to the previous owner's offspring, sometimes other members of the family, but in some cases the king could decide to offer them to someone else.

In the latter case, if the deceased noble's relatives were still alive, refusing to grant them the lands was most commonly a sign of royal disfavour. The new owners would also typically face considerable hostility from the family of the previous lord of the lands. However, neither of the above seems to have taken place in the case of Esiko: sources do not mention any conflicts with the house of Wettin; and only several years later, royal documents confirm generous bequests received by the count from Otto III,<sup>523</sup> which almost certainly rules out earlier disfavour.

Therefore, the fact that Binizo's lands passed to a Wettin, rather than his brother, combined with the lack of any recorded tensions between the two families, can be explained either by the fact that the lords of Merseburg were related to the Wettin, or that the two houses were linked by particularly friendly relations, possibly also mutual political goals. While the former of the assumptions finds no confirmation in the available sources, the latter seems to be somewhat substantiated, even if indirectly. We do know that Henry II held Esiko in high esteem and that the count was one of the king's most faithful supporters in Thuringia. Other men particularly close to the king included his successor in Merseburg, count palatine Burchard, and the next successive lord of the castle, the already mentioned Frederick of Eilenburg. It seems that a certain logical continuation can be traced in these appointments as the king chose from among his closest men. The mentioned lords must have constituted the core of the royal party in this part of Germany.

Esiko reappeared, already without his brother, during the congress in Frohse in march 1002, but he did nothing to distinguish himself there.<sup>524</sup> However, during the next meeting of the elites in Werla (early April of the same year), and later in his own castle of Merseburg, the count proved himself an ardent supporter of Henry II. No information survived pertaining to the last two years of Esiko's life. He died in 1004 and the monarch ordered him to be

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<sup>522</sup> *RGSEO*, vol. 3, p. 102, no. 277f.

<sup>523</sup> *RGSEO*, vol. 3, p. 167, no. 330.

<sup>524</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 214ff. (4,52).

ceremoniously interred in Merseburg. As the count had had no children or close relatives, his entire fortune passed on to the king.<sup>525</sup> In return, the king made sure to provide proper posthumous care for Esiko. Documents mention a cyclical donation from the count's former lands to church institutions, tied with the duty of regular prayers for his soul (commemorations).<sup>526</sup>

Very few others in Saxony enjoyed such significant favours from Henry II, but notably, the ones who did, had been in the king's grace since the very first days of his reign, as it was on them that monarch based his influence in Saxony. We hope that through the identification of this group of lords and their direct opponents, Boleslav Chrobry among the latter, we will be able to understand the reasons behind the Merseburg incident.

### 2.3.4 *Henry II and the Saxon Elites: Boleslav Chrobry's Place in the Political Structure of the Region*

The non-uniform reaction of German lords gathered in Merseburg to the assault on the Polish duke's retinue may be basis to an assumption that some divisions between particular factions among the Saxon elites manifested themselves during the congress. In fact, the matter of the Piast's status within the empire may have merely served as a catalyst for the conflict which in reality pertained to a much broader spectrum of political issues waiting to be settled by the newly elected ruler. Be as it may, the divisions among Saxon aristocracy truly and strongly manifested themselves only in 1009, and resulted in the almost complete replacement of all the lords governing the eastern marches. Notably, the newly appointed lords were by principle far more obsequious towards Henry II and his policies than their predecessors.

The mentioned events are of considerable interest to us, as they reveal older conflicts, present in the noble circles of Saxony even before the escalation of the conflict between Boleslav Chrobry and Henry II. We already discussed one of said conflicts while characterising the house of Ekkehard and their circles; the dispute between Herman and his uncle Guncelin which resulted in Henry II's intervention and the older man's divestiture and arrest. The decision greatly undermined Boleslav Chrobry's influence in the region of Lausitz.

Meanwhile, also the changes taking place in the northern march were not to the Piast's benefit. It had all begun with a discord within a family. Werner, son of the already mentioned margrave Liuthar of Walbeck, the organiser of

<sup>525</sup> *RGSEO* vol. 3, p. 241, no. 391; (p. 242, no. 392): *Thietmar*, p. 337 (6,16).

<sup>526</sup> *RGSEO*, vo. 3, p. 244, no. 394.

the congress in Merseburg and one of the co-authors of Henry II's success in 1002, engaged in a military action against a member of the house of Wettin, Dedi. The reasons of the conflict are of little consequence to us, Thietmar himself is very vague in their description.<sup>527</sup> What is important, however, is that Dedi had strong support from the king, who, if not for the long-lasting process of gathering a court of law, would most likely rule in his favour.<sup>528</sup> Unfortunately, he had no chance to do so as before the court could gather, the two nobles' forces clashed in a violent battle in which the Wettin was killed. The lands of the deceased man, on Henry II's decision, passed on to his son, Dietrich. Meanwhile, Liuthar's son, Werner was stripped of all lands inherited from his father (including the northern march).<sup>529</sup> The property was later granted to Bernhard of Handensleben, son of Dietrich, the former lord of the northern march (950–985).

In this particular instance, the internal power shifts of the empire were clearly and strongly interconnected with the keenest interests of Boleslav Chrobry. After all, Bernhard of Handensleben was a brother of Oda, Mieszko I's widow, expelled from Poland with her two sons, Mieszko and Lambert<sup>530</sup> around the year 995. The sons of Oda, who would not have forgotten their claims to their father's legacy,<sup>531</sup> were at that time, or at least all the evidence seems to suggest so, staying with their uncle, Bernhard.

Boleslav Chrobry would have been justified in finding the situation highly dangerous, as the lords of Haldensleben had long been counted among the most eminent houses of east German aristocracy.<sup>532</sup> Although the death of Mieszko in 992, conflicts with the Lutici, and the exile of Oda and her sons from Poland had significantly undermined the status and influence of the House Haldensleben, through Henry II's favour the family was beginning to recover and by 1009 it had managed to regain some of its former importance. In return for these concessions, grateful Bernhard made generous grants to the king's favourite foundation in Bamberg.<sup>533</sup>

<sup>527</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 385 (6,49): commentary: Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder*, p. 54f.

<sup>528</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 387 (6,50).

<sup>529</sup> *RGSEO*, 3, p. 277, no. 426: *Thietmar*, p. 385ff. (6,50).

<sup>530</sup> Jasiński, *Rodowód Pierwszych Piastów*, p. 100ff.

<sup>531</sup> Mieszko I's and Oda's grandson received in 1032 a province in Poland thanks to the support of the emperor—Henry J. Lang, "The Fall of the Monarchy of Mieszko II, Lambert", *Speculum* 49 (1974), 623–639.

<sup>532</sup> The lords of Haldensleben were supposed to have been relatives of the Ludolphings—Borawska, "Mieszko i Oda"; Ludat, *An Elbe Und Oder*, p. 54ff.

<sup>533</sup> *RGSEO*, vol. 3, p. 281, no. 429.

It is also noteworthy that the circles of the lords of Haldensleben sympathized with the house of Wettin, a coalition later also joined by Herman, son of Ekkehard of Meissen. To solidify the alliance between the Haldenslebens, the Wettins and Herman, the Ekkehardine's sister, Mathilda, married Dietrich, the son of Dedi Wettin and, on the distaff side, a relative of Bernhard of Haldensleben—a descendant of Thietburg, the margrave's sister.<sup>534</sup> The Wettin had already been in conflict with the counts of Walbeck for some time. After 995, the latter contended with the house of Haldensleben over the lordship of the northern march,<sup>535</sup> as it passed on to Liuthar, rather than Bernhard, the son of its former ruler Dietrich (d. 985).

It seems that the conflict with the lords of Haldensleben encouraged Liuthar of Walbeck to seek support from Boleslav Chrobry, the enemy of his enemy, even though the margrave was at that time in conflict with Otto III<sup>536</sup> who, as we know, was favourably disposed towards the Polish ruler. In early spring of 1002, it was Liuthar who most likely mediated between the Piast and Henry of Bavaria, the then claimant to the throne, allowing the two nobles to come to an agreement.<sup>537</sup> The tradition of political cooperation with the Piast was continued by Liuthar's son and heir Werner,<sup>538</sup> which vexed Thietmar who was closely related to the family.<sup>539</sup> We also know of a long-standing aversion between the house of Haldensleben and the house of Gero,<sup>540</sup> the latter being connected to the Piasts by common political sympathies.<sup>541</sup>

The faction supporting cooperation with the Polish ruler also included the counts of Querfurt. It was, among others, the family of the aforementioned<sup>542</sup> Saint Brun of Querfurt, whose extensive missionary, and to a lesser extent political, involvement was very much in line with the interests of Boleslav Chrobry.<sup>543</sup> Several other remarks can be traced in source texts that mention similar, 'pro-Polish' attitudes of various Saxon lords. One has to bear in mind, however, that the complex web of alliances and animosities fluctuated based on the actual situation, and a comprehensive interpretation of this puzzle is greatly hindered by the laconism of the surviving sources.

<sup>534</sup> RGSEO, 3, p. 273, no. 421.

<sup>535</sup> Ludat, *An Elbe Und Oder*, p. 46; Jerzy Strzelczyk, "Lotar z Walbeck", SSS, vol. 3, p. 298; RGSEO, 3, p. 36 no. 235; Claude, *Geschichte des Erzbistums Magdeburg*, p. 250.

<sup>536</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 251f. (5,3).

<sup>537</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 253 (5,3).

<sup>538</sup> RGSEO, 3, p. 310f., no. 459; Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von*, p. 172f.

<sup>539</sup> Liuthar was the uncle of the chronicler.

<sup>540</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 121 (3,9); Ludat, "Piastowie i Ekkehardynowie", p. 188.

<sup>541</sup> Ludat, "Piastowie i Ekkehardynowie", p. 192, note 65.

<sup>542</sup> See chapter 2.2. of this work.

<sup>543</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 186ff.

A certain gauge of Saxon attitudes towards the Piast could be found in the nobles' views concerning the empire's dealings with the pagan Lutizi, whose relations with Poland were marked by deep and mutual antagonism. Simply put, considering the distribution of power in the region in those days, Germany, should it desire to oppose the Piast, had no choice but to seek allies among the Lutizi, and vice versa.

The decision was not as obvious as one might think, both the Polabians and the Poles were actively involved in western politics, often too actively to be acceptable for particular Saxon houses. One must also not forget that the empire was not a fully consolidated state at the time, virtually each group of regional aristocracy had their own interests and aspirations, often conflicting with those of the crown. The actual state of the relations between the monarch and the court in Gniezno was therefore largely dependent on the momentary results of the political struggle among east German nobles; the current coalitions between particular political centres; and the never-ending conflicts, plots and rivalries of the aristocracy.<sup>544</sup>

To sum up, we should observe that the house of Billung, seated northernmost and somewhat separated from southern nobility who were more closely involved in central politics and focussed their interests on Lausitz, remained hostile towards the Polabians: the Obotrites and especially the Lutizi, and would gladly use Poland to counter them. Therefore Bernhard was favourably inclined towards the potential alliance with Boleslav Chrobry. It would also seem that similar sentiments were even expressed by the archbishops of Magdeburg, who—including the Bavarian Tagino, Henry II's trusted partisan—were reluctant to accept the Liudolfing's anti-Polish politics. On the other hand, the Haldenslebens, although hostile towards the Polabians,<sup>545</sup> were equally antagonistic towards Boleslav Chrobry who had, after all, disinherited the sons of Oda, the sister of the house's senior—Bernhard.

The hostile, or at least unfriendly attitude of Boleslav's stepmother and her kin towards the Polish dukedom, was shared by the house of Wettin, including the Polish ruler's son-in-law, Herman—motivated by his conflict with Guncelin—and Esiko, the count of Merseburg. The latter two nobles may not have necessarily been brought together by some particular hatred towards the Piast. What is clearly evident, however, is the fact that the two men's

<sup>544</sup> Körntgen, "Königtum, Adel und Kirche", pp. 79–109.

<sup>545</sup> *RGSEO*, vo. 3, p. 278, no. 426, p. 307f, no. 457: Bernard's reception of the territorial power over the Northern March was treated with reserve by the Lutizi: they did not participate in the German expeditions to Poland in 1010 and 1012 and even the peace between them and Henry II had to be additionally strengthened.



placement in Saxon hierarchy had been relatively low under Otto III, while through Henry II's favour they both rose to positions of great eminence. The Polish ruler might have been counted among their enemies simply due to his ties to the previous generation of Saxon elites.

Henry II's aversion towards Bernhard Billung,<sup>546</sup> Liuthar of Walbeck, Gero II,<sup>547</sup> and Boleslav himself, can hardly be explained by his desire to sever any bonds with the policies of his predecessor. His attitude was more likely due to the fact that during the reign of Otto III and Theophanu before him, nobles had grown accustomed to considerable independence, which the iron-fisted Bavarian would not tolerate. It is also possible that the monarch's reserve towards some of the mentioned aristocrats was due to their participation in, as rather laconically mentioned by Thietmar, a conspiracy against Otto III which had supposedly arisen in Saxony shortly before the emperor's death.<sup>548</sup>

The case of opposing Otto III's authority had only ever been mentioned by Thietmar and in truth we cannot say much about the actual nature of the supposed sedition. The bishop of Merseburg, as indeed most authors of the period, had a tendency to intertwine facts and interpretations and was hardly objective in his depictions. Possibly, the matter was simply that of the Saxon nobles contesting the emperor's focus on Italy while their own lands were becoming marginalised in imperial politics. We do know that the feelings of dissatisfaction must have been quite common. As we could already observe,<sup>549</sup> even Brun of Querfurt, Otto III's long time friend and confidant, expressed certain disapproval with the emperor's neglect of Saxon problems. At the same time, however, this was an epoch when expressing one's own opinion, particularly incompatible with the monarch's, could easily be considered treason.

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<sup>546</sup> During the rule of Henry II he retained his office only thanks to a strong position of the family in Saxony and his originally defensive policy towards the ruler of the Reich, which, after all, did not protect him from an open conflict with the monarch—Giese, "Der Stamm der Sachsen", p. 30ff.

<sup>547</sup> He was persecuted by the people of Henry II—Thietmar himself moans about the malicious ravaging of his lands by the army concentrated for the expeditions against Poland—*Thietmar*, p. 491ff., (7,16).

<sup>548</sup> *His death [i.e. Otto III] was preceded by many troubling events. Indeed, our dukes and counts conspired against him in many ways, not without the knowledge of the bishops. The conspirators sought the support of Duke Henry, who later succeeded the emperor, but he refused to become involved, having been loyal up to then in all things-* *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 187; *Thietmar*, p. 212 (4,49)—see also: Görich, *Otto III. Romanus Saxonicus*, p. 146ff.

<sup>549</sup> Chapter 2.2.1 of this work.

We may only guess which members of the eminent Saxon nobility shared the views of the contesters. In the light of Thietmar's accounts of the intensive contacts between the count of Walbeck and Henry of Bavaria shortly after Otto III's death, Liuthar's discontent would seem rather likely, particularly considering the emperor's favour shown to margrave Ekkehard. Notably, the position of Henry himself did not necessarily have to be as loyal towards the emperor as maintained Thietmar, the chronicler was hardly unbiased in his depictions of the Bavarian. We also cannot know what stance was adopted by Bernhard Billung, Duke of Saxony. The example of his father who, in a somewhat similar situation, had not hesitated to ostentatiously express his dissatisfaction,<sup>550</sup> gives grounds to a supposition that the son would also side with the contesters. It is also highly likely that they were supported by Giseler, the archbishop of Magdeburg, who was engaged in a lengthy dispute with Otto III over the once abolished episcopate of Merseburg.<sup>551</sup>

Margrave Ekkehard of Meissen, closely related to Bernhard Billung and cooperating with him in most matters after Otto III's death, had benefitted greatly from the king's favour received in the monarch's last years on the throne. Historiographers commonly refer to him, and not without plenty of evidence to support it,<sup>552</sup> as the pillar of the emperor's reign in eastern Germany. It seems that Ekkehard was one of very few Saxon lords to firmly take the emperor's side in the dispute. The overall support for the contestants must have been fairly broad, however, as even Thietmar refrained from condemning them, despite his otherwise great contempt for any acts of insubordination. Indeed, the fact that Ekkehard was associated with Otto III's unpopular policies, might have been the reason for his utter failure when contending to the throne.

Despite suggestions in earlier (esp. Polish) historiographies, the character of the postulates put forward by the contesting magnates did not necessarily have to be in conflict with the directions of the then Piasts' politics.<sup>553</sup> The Saxons hoped to gain a lot from a potential conquest of Polabia. The war with the pagan, even if ethnically kindred, Lutizi could have also proven potentially very beneficial to the Polish ruler.

<sup>550</sup> Althoff, "Das Bett des Königs".

<sup>551</sup> Schlesinger, *Kirchengeschichte Sachsens im Mittelalter*, p. 58ff.; Gerd Althoff, "Magdeburg-Halberstadt-Merseburg. Bischöfliche Repräsentation und Interessenvertretung im ottonischen Sachsen", in *Konstanzer Arbeitskreis für mittelalterliche Geschichte, Reichenau-Tagung vom 22. März-25 März 1994* (Konstanz, 1994), pp. 15-35.

<sup>552</sup> Rupp, *Die Ekkehardiner, Margrafen von*, p. 64ff.

<sup>553</sup> Zygmunt Wojciechowski, "Bolesław Chrobry i kryzys stosunków polskoniemieckich", *Przegląd Zachodni* (1948), 370-383, p. 381.

However, Boleslav Chrobry owed a lot to the emperor and, much more importantly, expected to still achieve a lot through the alliance with Otto III.<sup>554</sup> Therefore, it seems rather unlikely that he should decide to have affiliated himself with the conspiring party. Following the emperor's death, however, the contesters divided into two groups, those supporting Ekkehard and those not ready to recognise the royal aspirations of the margrave of Meissen. The latter were not necessarily sympathising with the Bavarian either. However their choice being limited as it was, and the lobbying efforts of Liuthar of Walbeck bearing ample fruit, they eventually accepted Henry II as their king. Boleslav Chrobry, as we have tried to demonstrate here, belonged to the latter group.

The new king saw potential benefits in supporting certain Saxon houses (e.g. the Haldensleben or the Wettin), and was rather unfavourably disposed towards the Billung—although their position was so strong that the monarch was forced to tolerate them. However, the ties between the lords of the northern march with the Piasts and the 'old', 'Ottonian' Saxon aristocracy, was likely seen as a significant threat by Henry II. Therefore, count Esiko's initiative to kill Boleslav Chrobry, impulsive and ill-prepared as it most likely was, was welcomed by Henry II with possibly not contentment, but certainly understanding.

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<sup>554</sup> *Vita Quinque Fratrum*, p. 48 (c. 8).

### CHAPTER THREE

#### POLARISATION OF ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE POLISH STATE AND THE PREVALENCE OF VIEWS UNFAVOURABLE TO THE PIAST MONARCHY

The final section of our discussion, focussed on the reign of Mieszko II, covers a particularly long period of time. Specifically, it begins with the earliest available information pertaining to Boleslav Chrobry's son and heir dating back to the account of the congress of Merseburg in 1013; and ends with an analysis of the power struggles within the Piast dynasty, which began in the final years of Mieszko's reign, i.e. the early 1030s. The section also includes an look at German reactions to the coronation of Boleslav Chrobry shortly before his death (in 1025), and repeated in the same year by his son. In order to maintain the logical structure of these deliberations, we were forced to abandon a strictly chronological approach, as those observing Boleslav's and his son's coronations from Germany perceived them as a single event.

Another issue of particular interest to us will be an analysis of the available source texts pertaining to the wars between Mieszko II and Conrad II, as well as the German-Russian interventions in Poland in support of the claims of younger Piasts (1031). Our deliberations will be concluded with an overview of information pertaining to Mieszko II's death in 1034.

Interestingly, in the beginning of the discussed period the actual structure of German commentaries pertaining to Polish rulers and their country seemed to have remained generally unchanged. Still, authors could be generally divided into those favourably or unfavourably disposed towards the Piast dynasty. By the end of the period, however, the former seemed to have virtually disappeared, with the vast majority of German sources referring to Polish rulers and their state with varying levels of distrust, sometimes even hostility.

3.1 MIESZKO II—THIETMAR'S *MILES REGIS*<sup>1</sup>

We know well how much Thietmar disliked Boleslav Chrobry, how malicious he could be in his comments about the ruler's regal status, and how far he could go to depreciate his political importance.<sup>2</sup> It is therefore particularly interesting and surprising to observe how different he was in his treatment of the son of the "poisonous snake" and "roaring lion"—as the bishop of Merseburg described the constantly rebuked ruler. Meanwhile, the young duke was depicted either neutrally or, if not auspiciously, most certainly quite warmly.<sup>3</sup> Some sections of Thietmar's narration that pertain to Mieszko II give a sense of a certain respect, sometimes even sympathy.<sup>4</sup> In any case, in the chronicler's opinion it was Boleslav Chrobry who was responsible for the evil acts of opposition to his beloved monarch—Henry II. His son, even when he fought against the king, did so—in Thietmar's opinion—only under the influence of his "wicked father".<sup>5</sup>

We can assume that this particular manner of depicting Mieszko II by the bishop of Merseburg was due to a number of complex and interrelated circumstances, all of which, as far as we can interpret them, are closely related to the subject matter of these deliberations, and as such should be investigated in greater detail.

3.1.1 *Family Background of Mieszko II's Mother*

Thietmar's first mention of the Piast ruler's son was made as he enumerated the particular wives and children of Boleslav Chrobry. Although the son himself was merely mentioned by name in this section of the chronicle and no details are given at this point, the Saxon chronicler devoted an entire passage to his mother, Emnilde—the third wife of Boleslav Chrobry, and the only one whose marriage to the duke lasted for many years.<sup>6</sup> Inter-

<sup>1</sup> This term, used with reference to Mieszko II and his relations with Henry II, appears only in the so called interpolation (adaptation) of the chronicle, written in the monastery of Corvei, perhaps by Thietmar himself. Nevertheless, it renders well the thought included in the original work by the Saxon chronicler—see: *Thietmar*, p. 436 note 461 (6,90), p. 485, (7,12); and: Hoffmann, *Mönchkönig und 'rex idiota'*, p. 175.

<sup>2</sup> Schröder, *Völker und Herrscher*; Lippelt, *Thietmar von Merseburg*, p. 170f. passim.

<sup>3</sup> Thietmar always addressed Mieszko II as duke (*dux*), whereas Boleslav the Brave was most often called by his name only. If the term 'duke' was used by the chronicler to name the Piast, the words 'deceitful' or 'illegitimate', or some other expressions that repudiated his position accompanied it.

<sup>4</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 493, (7,17).

<sup>5</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 322; *Pater nefarius—Thietmar*, p. 501, (7,23).

<sup>6</sup> From 989 until 1016 or 1017, when Emnilde died—Jasiński, *Rodowód pierwszych Piastów*, p. 88.

estingly, the woman was portrayed very favourably. The fact is of considerable significance to our deliberations as it seems that certain logical links can be traced between Mieszko II's portrayal further on in several sections of Thietmar's text, and the depiction of the duke's mother. It is, in a way, fairly understandable considering a tendency common in medieval societies—or any traditionalistic societies for that matter—to view and judge a person through the prism of their family and ancestry.

And so, as depicted by the bishop of Merseburg, Emnilde was

Faithful to Christ, she formed her husband's unstable character completely for the better and strove unceasingly to wash away both of her sins through the generous dispersal of alms and abstinence.<sup>7</sup>

The chronicler clearly employed the very popular in those days model of a pious and good wife, watching over her husband's conduct and encouraging him to follow the principles of faith, or convert if he was still a pagan (so called *mulier suadens*).<sup>8</sup> And although Emnilda could by all means have been—and indeed likely was—a woman full of virtue, it remains a researcher's duty to establish what, apart from whatever her actual personality traits might have been, inspired such a portrayal of the duchess. After all, it is commonly known that between the lines of the bishop's chronicle one could often read deeper reflections reflecting the author's worldview.

When considering the above problem, we must also refer to Thietmar's mention of Emnilde's father, since, as already mentioned, the assessment of an individual was in those days greatly influenced by the reputation of one's family. We should therefore observe that Mieszko II's grandfather on the distaff side, Dobromir, must have also been respected by the bishop of Merseburg as the chronicler, when mentioning his name, refers to him with great reverence as *venerabilis senior*.<sup>9</sup> We know nothing more about either his ancestry or the location of his lands as Thietmar's is the only source text

<sup>7</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 193; *Thietmar*, p. 227 (4,58): *Christo fidelis ad omne bonum instabilem coniugis sui mentem declinavit et immensa elemosinarum largitate et abstinentia utriusque maculas abluere non desistit.*

<sup>8</sup> In a similar way, moreover, was presented Dobrawa—wife of Mieszko I: *Thietmar*, p. 219ff. (4,55)—more about the problem of femininity at this time: Martin Homza, "The Role of Saint Ludmila, Doubravka, Saint Olga and Adelaide in the Conversions of their Countries (*The Problem of Mulieres Suadentes*, Persuading Women)", in *Early Christianity in*, pp. 187–202; Jane T. Schulenburg, "Early Medieval Women, Prophecy, and Millennial Expectations", in *The Year 1000. Religious and Social Response of the First Millennium*, ed. Michael Frassetto (New York, 2002), pp. 237–256.

<sup>9</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 225, (4,58)—see: Herbert Ludat, "Dobromir", LMA vol. 3, p. 1150f.

ever to mention Dobromir's name.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the only solid facts to allow any speculations about the lineage of Mieszko II's grandfather are provided by the origin of his and his daughter's names and the above mentioned title applied to him. The former clue seems to indicate his Slavic origin, although Thietmar does not explicitly state that anywhere in his work. Our assumption is based on the fact that it was incredibly rare for members of the German, and earlier Frankish, elites to use Slavic names, even if through marriage the mothers of the children were of Slavic descent.<sup>11</sup> Dobromir's daughter's name—Emnilde, popular among Saxon nobility of the day, suggests that almost certainly the duke's unmentioned wife may have come from the circles of east German aristocracy.<sup>12</sup> The matter of the exceptionally flattering title used in connection with his name is even more mysterious, however, also in this case we can attempt if not to unambiguously interpret the matter, which is impossible in the absence of sufficient sources, then possibly at least to clarify the meaning of the designation as used by the chronicler.

The mention of Emnilde's father is the only instance in the text where Thietmar chose to use the full phrase *venerabilis senior*, both of its elements, however, occur throughout the chronicle in various contexts. A look at the use of these words by the author provides an interesting insight into the chronicler's attitude to Mieszko II's grandfather. The denomination *venerabilis* was often used by Thietmar to refer to particularly eminent church officials, in most cases posthumously.<sup>13</sup> The same was also employed in reference to highly respected, pious nuns.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>10</sup> RGSEO, 3, p. 48ff., (no. 246); Jasiński, *Rodowód pierwszych Piastów*, p. 86f.; Labuda, *Studia nad początkami*, vol. 1, p. 226ff., 498ff.

<sup>11</sup> Exception is the name of Svatopluk /Zwentibold/, which appeared in the circle of the aristocracy in southern Germany: Michael Mitterauer, "Slawischer und bayerischer Adel am Ausgang der Karolingerzeit", *Carinthia* 1, 150 (1960), 693–726.

<sup>12</sup> Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder*, p. 144; Jacek Hertel, *Imiennictwo dynastii piastowskiej we wczesnym średniowieczu* (Warszawa-Poznań-Toruń, 1980), p. 141.

<sup>13</sup> Tagino, Archbishop of Magdeburg—*Thietmar...*, p. 309 (5,42); also bishops: Siegfried of Halbestadt—p. 31 (1,23); Hildeward of Halbestadt—p. 169 (4,18); Rether of Paderborn—p. 255 (5,5); Gottschalk of Freising—p. 333 (6,13); Wigbert of Merseburg—p. 369 (6,37); Bernhar of Werden—p. 513 (7,31); Liudolf of Augsburg—p. 179 (4,26); Thietmar of Osnabrück—p. 565 (7,67); Rheinbern of Kołobrzeg (Kolberg)—p. 571 (7,72); Eid of Meißen—p. 499 (7,22); Bernward of Hildesheim—p. 613 (8,24); but also the Pope Benedict V—p. 231 (4,62); Hepo, Deacon of Magdeburg—p. 235 (4,65); Liudolf, Abbot of Corvey—p. 241 (4,71); Conrad, Canon of Magdeburg—p. 247 (4,74); Gedeon, Provost of Magdeburg, who was dead then—p. 519 (7,35); and also dead, the monk Berner—p. 595 (8,10).

<sup>14</sup> And also Mathilda, sister of Otto II, abbess of Quedlinburg—p. 197 (4,41); p. 199 (4,42) and Mathilda, cousin of the chronicler Thietmar, the nun—p. 467 (7,3); Friderun, died the guardian of the church hospice where Thietmar stayed as a guest—*Thietmar*, p. 503 (7,24).

Among secular nobles, the designation *venerabilis* was used when talking about Mathilda, king Henry I's wife,<sup>15</sup> as well as margrave Hodo, emperor Otto I's tutor and a close friend of Thietmar's family.<sup>16</sup> The same was also employed when referring to the author's own revered grandmother, Mathilda;<sup>17</sup> to Emma, the queen of England for whom he expressed great sympathy in connection with the invasion by the loathed Danes;<sup>18</sup> as well as to Robert the Pious of France.<sup>19</sup> It is also noteworthy that the word in question was also used by the chronicler to refer to Saint Peter himself.<sup>20</sup>

Similarly eminent applications can be attributed to the second part of the designation used by Thietmar to refer to Mieszko II's grandfather. After all, the bishop of Merseburg referred to God himself as senior, his vassal being in his opinion the king, Henry I.<sup>21</sup> More commonly, however, the meaningful word *senior* was used, although reluctantly, to eminent archbishops, usually in the context of their authority over their vassals,<sup>22</sup> and less frequently to bishops.<sup>23</sup> The same also appeared when referring to German monarchs to emphasize their power over their clerical and secular subjects: Otto II;<sup>24</sup> Henry II.<sup>25</sup> The denomination also appeared in reference to a certain Erp, father of archbishop Walter:

a man of praiseworthy life and esteemed by all of his contemporaries.<sup>26</sup>

It was also used to distinguish a certain Brun:

an illustrious and praiseworthy lord (senior egregius). He was my friend by virtue of our blood relationship, but was very friendly to everyone else as well.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>15</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 29 (1,21), p. 47 (2,4); p. 69 (2,18).

<sup>16</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 89 (2,29).

<sup>17</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 167 (4,17).

<sup>18</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 527 (7,40).

<sup>19</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 535 (7,46).

<sup>20</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 133 (3,17).

<sup>21</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 23 (1,15).

<sup>22</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 79 (2,23); p. 125 (3,12); p. 47 (6,75); p. 503 (7,24).

<sup>23</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 97 (2,33)—Brun of Werden; p. 361 (6,31)—Henry of Würzburg; p. 617 (8,28)—Adalbold of Utrecht.

<sup>24</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 67 (2,16); p. 159 (4,10); p. 197 (4,42).

<sup>25</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 307 (5,41), p. 335 (6,13) i p. 401 (6,61); the term *senior* as a synonym of the royal title—p. 403 (6,62); more on this: Fried, *Otto III und Boleslaw Chrobry*, p. 77f.

<sup>26</sup> *The Chronicon of Thietmar*, p.; 287; *Thietmar*, p. 417 (6,75).

<sup>27</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 450f. (6,94).



Notably, Mieszko I himself, in a long passage devoted to his conversion, is praised by the chronicler and given the honorific title of *senior*, the leader of his now—most importantly—baptised people.<sup>28</sup>

The author also employs the denomination to refer to a certain Prokui, allegedly the uncle of Stephen I of Hungary. The reason for Thietmar's respect for the lord, manifested despite his conflict with Stephen (a relation of king Henry II of Germany),<sup>29</sup> could have been the fact that the duke belonged to the family of the highly respected ruler of Hungary.<sup>30</sup> At the same time, an identical expression used in reference to Svtopolk the duke of Kiev, elevated in 1018 to the throne of Rus by Boleslav Chrobry, bore no positive connotations whatsoever, and stood merely for his authority over his subjects.<sup>31</sup> Similar meaning could be read into the designation of *senior* when related to Mstislav, prince of the Abodrites,<sup>32</sup> Boleslav Chrobry himself,<sup>33</sup> as well as margrave Gero II of the eastern march.<sup>34</sup>

To conclude this overview of the various contexts in which Thietmar employed the word *senior*, let us mention one final example of a more private sphere of social life, where the designation, as used by the chronicler, expressed simply a form of superiority, meaning simply the lord of the household, i.e. the husband.<sup>35</sup>

To sum up the above analysis, the denomination *senior*, as used by Thietmar to distinguish Dobromir, Mieszko II's grandfather, seems—despite the certain relativity of its meaning—to have been meant simply to indicate a leader of a certain group of people, whose status—resulting from legal grounds or social norms—was not questioned by the bishop of Merseburg. The adjective *venerabilis*, on the other hand, was typically used by Thietmar to honour someone and emphasize their position. The term was most importantly employed to emphasize one's exceptional piety. Considering all the above, Thietmar seems to have had quite an exceptional respect for Dobromir. It may prove somewhat problematic to explain the same based solely on the rather ephemeral appearance of Emnilde's father in the chronicle. However, by considering a much broader historical context and available source texts,

<sup>28</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 221 (15,55).

<sup>29</sup> The man of Gisela, the sister of Henry II: Birgit Hielscher, "Gisela, Königin von Ungarn und Äbtissin von Passau-Niedernburg", *Ostbairische Grenzmarken* 10 (1968), 265–289.

<sup>30</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 585 (8,4).

<sup>31</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 621 (8,32).

<sup>32</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 587 (8,5).

<sup>33</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 303 (5,37).

<sup>34</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 455 (6,96).

<sup>35</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 583 (8,3), p. 69 (2,18).

we may attempt to venture some educated guesses as to the ancestry and eminence of the duke.<sup>36</sup>

A fact crucial to our further deliberations and almost certainly irrefutable is that Dobromir's domain must have been located somewhere along the German-Slavic border, possibly in Lausitz, Milzeni or in the Stodoran country.<sup>37</sup> A consequence of the above would be a likely relation by marriage with Saxon aristocracy, possibly—as has been suggested by Herbert Ludat—with the ruling dynasty,<sup>38</sup> which could easily account for the ostensible reverence expressed by Thietmar for Emnilde's family, as well as the unusual denomination used by the chronicler when referring to the Slavic duke. After all, we know how great a role was played in traditional communities by blood relations, even mythical ones.<sup>39</sup> Based on the evidence available to us, no other explanation seems equally plausible as an explanation of Thietmar's choice of words and the Saxon origin of the name given by the mysterious duke to his daughter.<sup>40</sup>

The title, apart from the suggested traces of Dobromir's connections to the German ruling dynasty, or at least the highest circles of east aristocracy of the empire, would also indicate the chronicler's full acceptance of the duke's position in the hierarchy of power in the region, as well as the character of his reign. Furthermore, the mentioned circumstances, coupled with our general awareness of the chronicler's political standpoint and his opinion of the Slavs, allow a fairly safe assumption that Dobromir's rule was to a considerable extent based on close cooperation with Saxon nobility and submission

<sup>36</sup> Ludat, "Piastowie i Ekkehardynowie", p. 193ff.: Tugomir (Tęgomir) had been a Prince of the Stodorani, see also: Jerzy Strzelczyk, "Połabszczyzna zapomniana. Część IV. Tęgomir, czyli dylemat—zdrajca czy 'ojciec ojczyzny'?", *Przegląd Zachodniopomorski*, 17 (2002), 7–27; see also: Lübke, "Die Elbslawen—Polens Nachbarn", p. 72.

<sup>37</sup> Korta, *Milsko i Łużyce*, p. 156ff.

<sup>38</sup> If Dobromir came from duke Tugomir (as maintained Ludat), he was Otto I's in-law and a relative of emperor's son Willhelm, archbishop of Mainz, the descendant of an unknown daughter of the above mentioned Tugomir, who was the first wife of Otto I—Ludat, *An Elbe und Oder*; also: Lübke, "Zwischen Polen und", p. 98.

<sup>39</sup> Bettina Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood* (Cardiff, 2006), pp. 133ff; Karl Hauck, "'Geblütsheiligkeit'", in *Liber Floridus. Mittellateinische Studien Paul Lehman dargebracht zum 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Bernhard Bischoff, Suso Brechter (St Ottilien, 1950), pp. 187–241, p. 187ff.: also: Eduard Hlawitschka, "Die Thronskandidaturen von 1002 und 1024. Gründeten sie im Verwandtenanspruch oder in Vorstellung von freier Wahl?", in *Reich und Kirche*, pp. 49–64, p. 495ff.; Althoff, *Verwandte, Freunde und Getreue*; more on the issue: Jean-Paul Roux, *Le sang. Mythes, symboles et réalités* (Paris, 1988).

<sup>40</sup> Ludat, "Piastowie i Ekkehardynowie", p. 188f.: the names of Emnilde and Regelinda, daughters of Boleslav the Brave, are repeated in some Saxon families related with each other.

to the German monarch. We believe that the observation may prove important in our analysis of the manner of Thietmar's depiction of Mieszko II.

It is also interesting to observe yet another aspect of the discussed fragment in Thietmar's chronicle, namely the fact that the portrayal of the Piast duke's mother and the brief mention of her father did not constitute a separate passage, but rather a part in a broader structure whose outline reflected the message carried by this section of the author's narrative in its entirety.

The comments about the duchess and her ancestry conclude a broader fragment of the chronicle devoted to the Piast house as such. It begins with the account of Mieszko I's death (in 992) and continues with a discussion of the event's consequences: the partition of the country between Boleslav and the sons of Oda, as well as the later exile of the duke's half-brothers.<sup>41</sup> Mieszko I's oldest son, whom as we well know Thietmar truly hated, was once again presented as an evil and dishonest man who refused to respect his siblings' rights to their share of the patrimony. The positive depiction of his wife could have in fact been motivated, most likely not deliberately, by the desire to satisfy a certain storytelling convention in which great evil is always, in one way or another, complemented by good in order to ensure the maintenance of a certain balance in terms of, for lack of a better word, morality.<sup>42</sup> This device also emphasised, and in fact possibly legitimised through the use of a well established literary convention, the chronicler's attempts to portray Boleslav Chrobry as a genuine villain.

It would be a grave over-interpretation to assume that it was only conventions and narrative structures that shaped the chronicler's message. After all, the historian wrote his work most of all for the benefit of his contemporaries rather than us—the future generations. In fact the chronicle constitutes a certain form of a dialogue between its author and the opinions of his auditorium.<sup>43</sup> Naturally an author of Thietmar's calibre would strive to present reality with as much objectivity as possible. The bishop of Merseburg made numerous declarations in the text to remain unbiased in his accounts, and

<sup>41</sup> More on this: chapter 2.1.2.–2.1.2. of this book.

<sup>42</sup> Joachim Ehlers, "Gut und Böse in der hochmittelalterlichen Historiographie", in *Die Mächte des Guten und Bösen. Vorstellungen im XII. und XIII. Jahrhundert über ihr Wirken in Heilsgeschichte*, ed. Albert Zimmermann (Berlin – New York, 1977), pp. 27–71; see also; Görich. *Otto III. Romanus, Saxonicus*, p. 28ff.; Brian Stock, *The Implication of Literacy. Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries* (Princeton, 1983), p. 455ff.

<sup>43</sup> Althoff, *Inszenierte Herrschaft*, pp. 52–77; Buc, "Writing Ottonian hegemony", pp. 3–38; Wojciech Mrozowicz, "Bogu czy ludziom? O motywach twórczości dziejopisarskiej", in *'Causa creandi'. O pragmatyce źródła historycznego*, eds. Stanisław Rosik, Przemysław Wiszewski, Acta Universitatis Vratislaviensis 2783 (Wrocław, 2005), pp. 91–101.

we have no grounds to doubt, for whatever reason, the sincerity of his intentions. There are, however, passages in his text that seem to suggest the effort was not entirely successful as the final shape of his narration was influenced, apart from the obvious impact of his own worldview, by subconsciously perceived external factors which interfered with his postulated objectivism.<sup>44</sup>

The fourth book of the chronicle, where the discussed passage can be found, was completed in late 1013,<sup>45</sup> i.e. while Emnilde was still alive (she died in 1017).<sup>46</sup> That particular fact, coupled with her kinship to Saxon aristocracy, must have influenced the way Boleslav Chrobry's wife was depicted in the chronicle. One might even go as far as to suggest the possibility of certain self-censorship that would result from the fear of family solidarity of Emnilde's eminent relatives who may have lived in the chronicler's closer or further milieu.<sup>47</sup> Traces of this kind of anxieties are not uncommon in Thietmar's work as his highly negative assessment of particular Saxon nobles would seem to end rather abruptly without naming the aristocrats in question. Sometimes, the chronicler would simply pass over certain facts that would speak against distinguished east German lords, even though they should have been included given their great significance to the matters discussed in the text.<sup>48</sup>

On the other hand, it also cannot be ruled out that for Thietmar the fact that Emnilde and her son were related to his own kinsmen, possibly even to his own house through some distant relation,<sup>49</sup> could have simply provided a certain sense of familiarity that influenced the positive treatment they received. The issue is indeed convoluted and the reason we mention all its inherent complexities in not only to display great interpretative possibilities,

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<sup>44</sup> The problems concerning the links between the text and the world it described were discussed, among others, in the following works: Buc, *The Dangers of Ritual*, also: Geoffrey Koziol, "Review article: The dangers of polemic: Is ritual still an interesting topic of historical study?", *Early Medieval Europe* 11 (2002), 367–388; Hans-Walter Goetz, *Von Fakten und Fiktionen* (Köln, 2003), pp. 225–257.

<sup>45</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 31 (Introduction).

<sup>46</sup> Jasiński, *Rodowód pierwszych Piastów*, p. 88.

<sup>47</sup> See e.g. *Thietmar*, p. 484 (7,12); p. 492 (7,17).

<sup>48</sup> The case of the alleged conspiracy against Otto III, which was supposedly formed by the Saxon aristocrats, bishops as well—*Thietmar*, p. 213 (4, 49); concealment who belonged to the group of Boleslav the Brave's allies—p. 329 (6,9); p. 493 (7,17); things were different when those mentioned persons could not pose a threat to the chronicler, see e.g. the case of Werner and Ekkehard II, who were disloyal to the ruler of the Reich at the Brave's—p. 439 (6,90).

<sup>49</sup> In traditional communities even distant kinship relationships were cultivated—Fichtenau, *Lebensordnungen des 10. Jahrhunderts*, vol. 1, pp. 124–130; David N. Dumville, "Kingship, Genealogies and Regnal Lists", in *Early Medieval Kingship*, eds. Peter H. Sawyer, Ian N. Wood (Leeds, 1977), pp. 72–104.

but mainly to prepare the grounds for an analysis of the chronicler's more specific depiction of Mieszko II himself. It seems that only by being aware of the context on which the bishop based his judgements, can we hope to uncover the various meanings that would otherwise remain deeply hidden between the lines of his text.

### 3.1.2 *Congress of Merseburg 1013*

Let us now attempt, in the context of the previously made observations, to look more closely at the oldest account in Thietmar's work where the duke is actually presented in the centre of the affairs being described. The events in question took place in early 1013, when the second stage of wars between Henry II and Boleslav ended in a pivotal meeting in Merseburg.<sup>50</sup> The chronicler was surprisingly casual in his description of the above and quite significantly from the perspective of our analysis, in this particular case his laconism must have been a conscious choice. After all, since 1009 Thietmar had held the post of the bishop of Merseburg, and as such he would have been aware of everything happening in the capital of his diocese<sup>51</sup>—in fact he would have been obliged to personally participate in all church and secular ceremonies taking place as part of the congress.

In order to comprehensively analyse the matter, we should start with an in-depth look at the Saxon chronicler's actual account. The passage in question begins with the information that as the German king celebrated the Lord's Epiphany on January 6th 1013 in Allstedt (near Sangerhausen in southern Saxony, close to the border with Thuringia), he received messengers from Boleslav Chrobry who asked for a truce that would be confirmed by Mieszko, the Piast ruler's son.<sup>52</sup> The proposal was accepted and Henry II met with the young duke in Magdeburg, during the celebrations of the Purification of the holy Mother of God (February 2nd, 1013):

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<sup>50</sup> *Regesta Imperii*, 2, Abt. 4, p. 986, p. 994; commentary: Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, p. 218f.

<sup>51</sup> Gerd Althoff, "Thietmar von Merseburg", LMA 8, p. 695f.

<sup>52</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 435 (6,89).

Boleslav's son, Miesco, arrived bearing splendid gifts. He became the king's man,<sup>53</sup> and swore an oath of loyalty to him. Then, he was sent off with great honour and satisfaction so that he would come again.<sup>54</sup>

The interpretation of the above passage has provoked significant controversy among historians. We do not know how to understand the mentioned oath of loyalty, where the duke's *beneficium* was located, or if we should even be looking for the land that would traditionally be granted to a vassal by the senior accepting an oath of fealty.<sup>55</sup> Discrepant opinions have also been expressed as to whether the settlement made in Magdeburg was merely a preliminary arrangement or a finalised peace treaty that conclusively ended the war of 1007–1012.<sup>56</sup> The chronicler's account is so scant of information that it allows for no conclusive theses to be proposed.

The other available source text, independent of Thietmar's work,<sup>57</sup> the Annals of Quedlinburg,<sup>58</sup> are also of little help. The information conveyed therein in relation to the meeting in Magdeburg reads as follows:

King Henry arrived, propitiated by Boleslav's pleas, to Partenopolis [i.e. Magdeburg] where Boleslav had sent his son with plentiful gifts for the king, and once peace was settled, [Henry] was hospitable to the son and ordered that he [Boleslav] himself should meet with the king as soon as possible.<sup>59</sup>

<sup>53</sup> The text of the so called Dresden Manuscript (see the footnote below) is in this case slightly imperfect, as it skips the word *miles*. More comprehensive and linguistically more correct is the so called Interpolation of Corvey, which presents this version: *regis miles efficitur*—see: Thietmar, p. 436ff.—note no. 461; see also: RGSEO, 3, p. 312f., no. 461.

<sup>54</sup> *The Chronicon of Thietmar*, p. 297; Thietmar, p. 437ff. (6,90): *Miseco Bolizlavi filius cum magnis veniens muneribus regis efficitur et fidem cum sacramento firmit. Dehinc cum honore magno remittitur et, ut iterum veniret, delectatur.*

<sup>55</sup> Jedlicki, "Układ Merseburki z", p. 749ff.; Tadeusz Grudziński, "Charakter i znaczenie hołdu magdeburckiego Mieszka Bolesławowica z roku 1013", *Przegląd Historyczny* 66 (1975), 149–170, Labuda, *Mieszko II. Król*, p. 36ff.

<sup>56</sup> Sochacki, *Stosunki publicznoprawne między*, p. 71ff.

<sup>57</sup> Other accounts are secondary (Magdeburger Annals, Annalista Saxo)—RGSEO, vol. 3, p. 312f, no. 461; Wattenbach, Holtzmann, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im*, vol. 1, p. 65ff.; Franz-Josef Schmale, "Annalista Saxo", *LMA* vol. 1, p. 1005.

<sup>58</sup> The Annals of Quedlinburg were written between 1008–1006 and 1020–1030 in the convent of Quedlinburg Abbey. It was founded in 936 on the initiative of Mathilda, the widow of Henry I, as his memorial. For many centuries it enjoyed great prestige and influence—Karlheinz Blaschke, "Quedlinburg", *LMA* vol. 7, p. 359f.—see also: Wojtecki, "Slavica beim Annalisten", p. 162; Robert Holtzmann, *Aufsätze zur deutschen Geschichte im Mittelberaum* (Darmstadt, 1962), pp. 193–254; Gerd Althoff, "Gandersheim und Quedlinburg: Ottonische Frauenklöster als Herrschafts- und Überlieferungszentren", *FMS* 25 (1991), 123–144.

<sup>59</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 537f.: *Heinricus rex a Bolizlavone multis obsecrationibus exoratus, Parthenopolim venit, ubi isdem Bolizlavo filium suum cum variis donis in occursum*

Thus, the above passage, rather than clarify the circumstances of the meeting in Magdeburg, only adds to our reservations. For if peace settlement was reached in Magdeburg, why would Henry II demand to meet with Boleslav himself? We know for a fact, for instance from accounts by Thietmar himself, that reaching of a peace settlement did not require the interested rulers to actually meet in person: nothing of the sort is mentioned in relation to the peace of Poznań concluded in 1005,<sup>60</sup> or the peace of Bautzen of 1018.<sup>61</sup> Thus there is no doubt as to the above assumption—particularly since the source itself confirms that the meeting with Mieszko in Magdeburg was quite sufficient for the peace settlement to be reached, thus ending the war which, it would seem,<sup>62</sup> was at the time highly inconvenient for either of the sides. Moreover, Polish envoys had actually already met with Henry II in 1013 in Altstedt, thus giving sufficient time for the conditions of the truce to be agreed upon, with Mieszko II only confirming them in Magdeburg—although the latter would also seem somewhat unnecessary. The fact of the matter remains, however, that no further negotiations with Boleslav Chrobry himself were needed.<sup>63</sup>

Furthermore, it is interesting to observe the actual phrasing employed by both sources, emphasizing the fact that the German king wanted to meet with the Polish ruler as soon as possible—as indeed happened shortly afterwards in Merseburg. The two meetings of Henry II with first the son and later the father took place within a relatively short timeframe (early February—mid May of the same year). In Thietmar's text, the two accounts are conveyed within the same passage referring to the German king's stay in the eastern lands of his empire. Therefore, it is a natural assumption that the events in question were connected in the chronicler's mind by shared significance, reflected a certain, common context.

For the time being, however, let us suspend the above discussion to allow a closer and more comprehensive look at the passage of Thietmar's chronicle referring to the contacts between Henry II and the two Piasts in 1013—only

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*regis honorifice misit; et utrimque pace compacta, filium laetus recepit, iussus regem quantocius ipse videre.*

<sup>60</sup> RGSEO vol. 3, p. 250f., no. 400.

<sup>61</sup> RGSEO vol. 4, p. 86ff., no. 534; *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 551 (a.1018): *Et hoc anno Bolizlavo per nuncios reconciliata pace, imperatoris gratiam recepit*; Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, p. 219.

<sup>62</sup> Henry II wanted peace on the eastern border of their country, to trek to Italy for the imperial crown. Boleslaw absorbed the Russian case, because his daughter, the wife of Prince Svtopolk, was imprisoned by Vladimir I, the Great, the ruler of the country—*Thietmar*, p. 571, (7,72).

<sup>63</sup> RGSEO vol. 3, p. 312f., no. 461.

after a comprehensive analysis of this source and the information conveyed in the Annals of Quedlinburg, will we be able to consider the true meaning of this particular account by the bishop of Merseburg, as well as its particular sections.

The discussed passage in Thietmar's work is concluded with a description of the ceremony of Pentecost celebrated in Merseburg. However, before continuing to that part of his account, the chronicler divided the particular "Piaſt" sections of his text with several intercalations: among these, two seem particularly significant—or at least interesting enough to draw the attention of many researchers—in the context of the discussed events. They may have also played a part in the structure of the account that Thietmar strove for. Firstly, after mentioning storms and fires that plagued Saxony in late February 1013, the author states that his own relative, count Werner, the son of margrave Liuthar of Walbeck, and Ekkehard, the brother of Herman of Meissen, Boleslav's son-in-law, had visited the court of the Polish ruler without the king's authorisation. Werner

had visited Boleslav without permission [of Henry II] and said many things contrary to the king's favour. Here, in our homeland, they had secretly received Boleslav's messengers.<sup>64</sup>

The punishment bestowed on the culprits was relatively lenient only through the intervention of the two counts' influential friends and relatives.

Next, the chronicler devotes a considerable part of his account to a description of a particularly acute fit of Henry II's chronic ailment—a severe stomach-ache that befell the king in Saxony and prevented him from spending Easter in Aachen.<sup>65</sup> Only then does the bishop of Merseburg continue to discuss—unfortunately rather laconically—the course of the meeting between Henry II and the Polish ruler in Merseburg. He writes:

Boleslav arrived on the vigil of this feast [Pentecost], having left hostages at home to guarantee his safety [23 May]. He was accorded the best reception. On the feast day itself, he commended himself into the king's hands and became his man. After swearing an oath, Boleslav acted as the king's arms-bearer as he processed to the church while wearing the crown. On Monday, he appeased the king by bestowing magnificent gifts that came not only from him, but also from his wife. He received much better and more through the king's largesse, and

<sup>64</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 297; *Thietmar*, p. 438 (6,90).

<sup>65</sup> Sometimes this attack is used to explain the fact that the king allegedly treated leniently his political opponents: Boleslav the Brave and Ezzo Ehrenfried—Strzelczyk, *Bolesław Chrobry*, p. 136.



also obtained the long-desired benefice. His hostages were thereupon released, with honour, and in a friendly manner.<sup>66</sup>

The annalist of Quedlinburg employed a somewhat different structure to his depiction of the events in question. The author begins with an account of the same occurrences as those mentioned by Thietmar: we read about Henry II's illness, described as far more serious than would seem from the bishop of Merseburg's account, as well as the natural disasters. Only then does the chronicler relate to the meeting held in the capital of Thietmar's diocese:

As Henry celebrated the Pentecost in Merseburg, among the scores of people gathered there, he was met by Boleslav bearing a great variety of gifts, who for peace offered [the king] everything of his and himself. He was welcomed with favour. They [the monarchs] spent several days together. As befitted a king, he bestowed [Henry II on Boleslav] the greatest honours and, not without harm to his own interest, allowed him to return [home].<sup>67</sup>

Most importantly, however, the Annals of Quedlinburg convey additional facts, omitted—most likely deliberately—by Thietmar. The annalist continues as follows:

Also from Slavonia many envoys arrived, among them Oldrich of Bohemia bearing gifts to honour the king. Although there had been animosity between him and his brother Jaromir as well as Boleslav [Chrobry], he managed to take power and obtain the title [of the duke of his] fatherland, while his brother was exiled.<sup>68</sup>

There are several important elements connecting the two accounts: particularly the mention of the oaths of fealty sworn by the two Polish dukes. Another significant similarity pertains to a fact actually omitted by both the chroniclers: neither of them reported on the marriage between Mieszko II

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<sup>66</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 298; *Thietmar*, pp. 441–445 (6,91): *In die sancto manibus applicatis miles efficitur et post sacramenta regi ad aecclesiam ornato incedenti armiger habetur. In II. feria regem magnis muneribus á se et a contextali sua oblatis placavit deindeque regia largitate his meliora ac multa maiora cum beneficio diu desiderato suscepit et obsides suos cum honore et laetitia remisit.*

<sup>67</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 537f.: *Heinricus in sancto pentecosten, maxima confluyente caterva, Meresburg se colligens, obvium habet Bolizlavonem cum magno apparatu diversorum munerum, pacis gratia sua omnia seque dedentem; quem benigne suscipiens, paucos dies secum morantem, ut par erat regiae dignitati, claro honore adauctum, non tamen sine sui regni detrimento, permisit remeare.*

<sup>68</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 539: *De Sclavonia et multi nuncii venerunt, quibus interfuit Othelricus de Bohemia cum donis etiam honorans faciem regis; cui, licet inter se et fratrem suum Geramirum et praefatum Bolizlavonem ira permanente, laeta succedunt, dato honore patriae, misso in exilium suo fratre.*

and Richeza, the niece of Otto III, daughter of count palatine Ezzo Erenfried and Mathilda (daughter of emperor Otto II),<sup>69</sup> which had allegedly been arranged during the congress of Gniezno in 1000.<sup>70</sup> Although the precise date of the marriage is unknown, later Polish sources place it in 1013,<sup>71</sup> and the date is, if indirectly, confirmed in the text of the chronicle of the Brauweiler monastery—a foundation of Richeza's family. The text relates the peace settlement between Poland and Germany to Mieszko II's marriage:

For at that time, the Polish king named Mieszko, having sent his envoys bearing various gifts befitting a member of royalty, through the mediation of said ruler [i.e. Henry II] to his [Ezzo's] firstborn daughter, asked for Richeza's hand in marriage, for which, as he desired, she had been prepared through proper upbringing and her virginal virtues, as many had hoped that by that marriage the kingdom of the Slavs would ally itself with the kingdom of Germany.<sup>72</sup>

The suggestion that the marriage would solidify the peace agreement of 1013 was substantiated by the basic traditions of those times. After all, it was a fairly common practice to secure peace treaties by forming family bonds between two formerly conflicted sides. It was exactly on such principle that in 979 Oda, daughter of Dietrich the margrave of the northern march, arrived at the Piast court to marry Mieszko I.<sup>73</sup> Similarly in 1018, her namesake and the daughter of margrave Ekkehard became the fourth wife of Boleslav Chrobry, thus solidifying the peace settlement reached in Bautzen.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>69</sup> Jasiński, *Rodowód pierwszych Piastów*, p. 114ff., see also: Marlene Nikolay-Panter, "Königin Richeza (um 1000–1063)", *Rheinische Lebensbilder* 12 (1991), 25–47; Eduard Hlawitschka, "Königin Richeza von Polen—Enkelin Herzog Konrads von Schwaben, nicht Kaiser Ottos II?", in *Institutionen, Kultur und gesellschaft. Festschrift für Josef Fleckenstein zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Lutz Fenske, Werner Rösener, Thomas Zotz (Sigmaringen, 1984), pp. 221–244; Peter Schreiner, *Królowa Rycheza, Polska i Nadrenia. Stosunki między Polakami a Niemcami w XI wieku/ Richeza, Königin von Polen und Gonnerin der Abtei Brauweiler: Beziehungen zwischen Deutschen und Polen vor 1000 Jahren*, Pulheimer Beiträge zur Geschichte 19. Sonderveröffentlichung (Poznań – Pulheim, 1996).

<sup>70</sup> Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, p. 198.

<sup>71</sup> Jasiński, *Rodowód pierwszych Piastów*, p. 114f.

<sup>72</sup> *Actus fundatoris monasterii brunwilarensis*, ed. Georg Waitz, MGH SS 14 (Hannover, 1883), pp. 123–146, p. 132f. (c. 12): *Nam eodem tempore [1013] Polinierum rex, nomine Mischeo, cum diversis regiae tamen personae congruis munerum speciebus, missis procis, per prae-fati regnatoris interventum filiae, eius, quae primogenita erat, Richezae petit consortium. Cuius, ut desiderabat, Puella sponsalibus, quo decebat cultu, multorum favoribus adaptatur; quoniam eiusdem occasione coniugii regnum Sclavorum regno Teutonicorum confoederari a multis spe non inani credebatur*. See also: Erich Wisplinghoff, *Die Benediktinerabtei Brauweiler, Germania Sacra. Historisch-statistische Beschreibung der Kirche des alten Reiches*, NF 29, 5 (Berlin – New York, 1992), pp. 216–231; Wiszewski, *Domus Boleszlai*, p. 497ff.

<sup>73</sup> Kurt Engelbert, "Die deutschen Frauen der Piasten von Mieszko I (†992) bis Heinrich I (†1238)", *Archiv für schlesische Kirchengeschichte* 12 (1954), 1–51, p. 2ff.

<sup>74</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 579ff. (8,1).

The fact that the Piast's marriage was not mentioned in the Annals of Quedlinburg could be justified by the generally selective approach to information conveyed in that source. However, the fact that the same was not accounted for by Thietmar—a man typically very well informed and careful to depict most matters pertaining to the borderlands of Slavdom and Germany—is intriguing to say the least. After all, the event must have been widely publicised considering the fact that the girl was, by the standards of the day, a relation of Henry II himself. Evidently, the lack of any reference to the marriage between Mieszko and Richeza by the bishop of Merseburg indicates that he was, for some reason, opposed to the matrimony.

On the other hand, however, the actual marriage ceremony did not necessarily have to take place in Merseburg during the congress between the Piasts, Henry II and the German elites—as has for some time been accepted as nearly a certainty by historiography.<sup>75</sup> Should the celebrations have taken place in the capital of Thietmar's diocese, the chronicler would have had no choice but to participate in the events at the side of the German ruler. An event of this sort would most certainly have been granted a mention in the bishop's chronicle,<sup>76</sup> at least in the form of some sharp remark aimed against Boleslav Chrobry, who later so strongly opposed the man who allegedly hosted of his son's wedding.

Besides, from what we know about the ritual of wedlock practiced in those days, it was significantly different from the marriage ceremonies of the later centuries. One example for the above is given by Thietmar himself. According to his account Oda, daughter of the margrave of Meissen Ekkehard I and the fourth wife of Boleslav Chrobry, simply arrived with her retinue sometime after 1018, escorted by Otto, the duke's younger son, to the Piast keep in Lusatia called Zützen.<sup>77</sup> There she was awaited by her somewhat aged betrothed and there the secular ceremony took place, possibly accompanied by some sort of a religious service, although in those days the Church was only beginning to take interest in the institution of marriage.<sup>78</sup> The matrimony was naturally finalised after a traditional exchange of legations and

<sup>75</sup> Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, p. 218.

<sup>76</sup> Even as some cutting remark directed to Boleslaw the Brave.

<sup>77</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 580f. (8,1).

<sup>78</sup> John K. Leonard, "Rites of Marriage in the Western Middle Ages", in *Medieval Liturgy. A Book of Essays*, ed. Lizette Larson-Miller (New York – London, 1997), pp. 165–202, p. 188ff.; Mar. Glasser, "Marriage in Medieval Hagiography", *Studies in Medieval and Renaissance History* 4 (1981), 3–34; see also: Helmut. Fußbroich, *Theophanu. Die Griechin auf den deutschen Kaiserthron. 972–991* (Köln, 1991), p. 44ff.; Franz-Reiner Erkens, *Herrschersakralität im Mittelalter. Von den Anfängen bis zum Investiturstreit* (Stuttgart, 2006), p. 170ff.

fitting gifts being presented to the bride's family,<sup>79</sup> but the wedding rite itself was not particularly religious in character—as can be observed in the case described by Thietmar—nor was it customarily held at the house, or country for that matter, of the bride to be.

In the case of Mieszko II's marriage to Richeza there is therefore little evidence to support the association between the matrimony and the recorded stay of the ducal family in Merseburg. There is one clue, however, which allows us, although indirectly, to relate to the events of 1013. The Brauweiler text explicitly mentions Henry II's involvement in the arrangement of Boleslav Chrobry's son marriage to the niece of Otto III.<sup>80</sup> It was in fact a rather unprecedented event in Piast history, for the family to become so closely related to Germany's ruling dynasty.<sup>81</sup> We could also assume that the presence of Emnilde—purportedly related to a line of Saxon aristocracy—further strengthened the position of the Piast house in the negotiations with the German ruler which were naturally bound to take place in such situations. The exceptional character of the Merseburg ceremony—Boleslav Chrobry not only swore an oath of fealty to Henry II but also became his sword-bearer, which despite the highly honorific circumstances still must have constituted an act of accepting the German ruler's authority<sup>82</sup>—inspires us to probe for other possible interpretations of the discussed events.

Let us once again look at the two surviving accounts of the congress in Merseburg. The most evident discrepancy between the two is found in the fact that while the anonymous author of the Annals of Quedlinburg reported the presence of Oldrich, duke of Bohemia in Merseburg, Thietmar completely ignored it in his account—although as the bishop of the local diocese he must have been aware of it. The above observation is of great significance as it can suggest our path for analysing the discussed passage of Thietmar's work which pertained to a variety of events taking place during and shortly after the congress.

Firstly, we should note that Thietmar, rather than relate the meeting between Henry II and the duke of Moravia that had taken place in the bishop's own diocese, preferred to inform his readers about German military assistance during Boleslav's expedition to Ruthenia, as well as the alleged slaughter of his own Petcheneg reinforcements by the Piast, as if the

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<sup>79</sup> *Relacja Ibrāhīma ibn*, p. 50.

<sup>80</sup> Labuda, *Mieszko II król*, p. 39: since the chronicle was written not earlier than in the 80's the eleventh century, the mention of the mediation of the king was only "cliche".

<sup>81</sup> Engelbert, "Die deutschen Frauen der Piasten", pp. 1–51.

<sup>82</sup> Dalewski, "Kaiser Lothar III., Soběslav I.", pp. 317–336.

chronicler intentionally aimed to emphasize the unbalanced and impulsive character of the ruler he so disliked.<sup>83</sup> Furthermore, having included a brief mention of matters unrelated to the German monarch's contacts with the Polish duke, Thietmar returns to the unfinished thread of Boleslav's treachery. With open distaste, he informs us that the duke failed to supply troops for Henry II's expedition to Italy,<sup>84</sup> to which he was obliged under the provisions of the Merseburg agreement as well as by principle of mutuality in return for the support during the Piast's war in Ruthenia. As if that were not enough, Boleslav actually went as far as to accuse the German ruler:

in a letter to the pope, he had complained that the king's secret plots prevented him from paying the tax he had promised to St Peter, Prince of the Apostles. Then, he sent spies to find out how the king was held in these parts and, wherever possible, lure men away from his favour.<sup>85</sup>

Having sufficiently convinced his readers of Boleslav's flaws, Thietmar abandons for a time the matters of east German politics and shifts his focus to other arenas: including other problems of Henry II, freshly crowned as emperor in 1014 in Rome.

Relatively soon, however, the chronicler returns to his depiction of the wicked and corrupted personality of Boleslav Chrobry by putting the blame on him for the outbreak of yet another war between Poland and the German ruler. As will be evidenced further on, the passage in question, although placed a dozen or so pages further on in the text from the accounts discussed earlier, is clearly related to the description of the congress which had taken place in 1013 in Thietmar's diocese. What adds to the curiousness of the discussed matter, is the significant role played by Mieszko II in the course of said events.

At a certain, unspecified point after the congress of Merseburg, Boleslav's son was sent to parley with the already mentioned duke of Bohemia, Oldrich. Unfortunately the outcome of the negotiations was not to the young Piast's

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<sup>83</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 445 (6,91).

<sup>84</sup> The support not only had a military significance, but also manifested the Polish ruler's subordination to the monarch of the Reich, and added splendour to the candidate for the emperor. What also mattered was that thanks to them Henry could appear as the monarch of a number of peoples, which was considered to legitimate the imperial power—see: *Widukind*, p. 76ff. (1,39; Hagen Keller, “*Machabeorum pugnae*. Zum Stellenwert eines biblischen Vorbilds in Widukinds Deutung der ottonischen Königsherrschaft”, in *Iconologia Sacra*. *Mythos, Bildkunst und Dichtung in der Religions- und Sozialgeschichte Alteuropas*. *Festschrift für Karl Hauck zum 75. Geburtstag*, eds. Hagen Keller, Nikolaus Staubach (Berlin – New York, 1994), pp. 417–437.

<sup>85</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 299; *Thietmar*, p. 448 (6,92).

benefit. The Premislid's men unexpectedly attacked the duke's retinue, killed several of his companions and took Mieszko himself captive. After some time, on Henry II's demand, Oldrich passed Mieszko II over to Germany, and from there—after what many Saxon nobles believed to have been an excessively long period of detention<sup>86</sup>—he eventually returned to his father. Thietmar provides no indication as to when exactly the described events took place, although, due to their placement in the chronicler's narration, they can be assumed to have occurred in 1014.<sup>87</sup> However, as this section of the text is ordered logically rather than chronologically, any definite dating of the incident is very difficult, particularly since it is mentioned only in Thietmar's chronicle.

The matter is further complicated by the fact that the chronicler does not refer to the analysed events directly, he mentions them almost as if on the side of accusing Boleslav of disloyalty and ill-will displayed after the unsuccessful talks between Henry II and the Polish envoy, Stoignew, which took place sometime in mid 1015.<sup>88</sup> In the chronicler's opinion, Henry II had done Boleslav Chrobry a great favour when he removed Mieszko II from Oldrich's hands, and the Polish duke again displayed nothing but astounding ingratitude. The suggestion of ungratefulness seems to have convinced several researchers as well, which is likely the reason why no attempt has been made to rationally explain the evident unwillingness of the Polish duke to fulfil his obligations under the Merseburg settlement;<sup>89</sup> i.e. refusing to aid the German monarch with troops during the war in Italy in the Spring of 1013, and later openly backing out from the terms agreed upon in Merseburg, which in consequence led to yet another military conflict with Germany in 1015. Boleslav Chrobry's behaviour, should we accept Thietmar's account literally, would seem rather irrational, and in moral terms quite iniquitous. And that, beyond any doubt, is the understanding that the chronicler intended to impose on us.

However, the whole situation as described by the bishop would have been odd, to say the least: in Merseburg, the Polish ruler managed to secure everything that he could have realistically hoped to gain at the time: the fief from Lutizians and Milzeni, the status of Henry II's vassal of the highest standing, only slightly lower than that of the king himself, all of the above secured by

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<sup>86</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 483f. (7,12); Görich, *Eine Wende im Osten*, p. 135ff.

<sup>87</sup> *RGSEO* vol. 3, p. 22ff., nos. 471, 473.

<sup>88</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 475ff., (7,9).

<sup>89</sup> The interpretation that Boleslav did not trust Henry is not such an attempt—*Thietmar*, p. 446 (commentary by Marian Z. Jedlicki in note no. 488).

the marriage of his son to the German monarch's relative. Afterwards, the king sent military aid to the expedition against Ruthenia which aimed to free the Polish duke's daughter and her husband Svatopluk from the grasp of Vladimir the Great.<sup>90</sup> Moreover, the noble monarch, Henry II, mindful of his duties as a senior, liberated the son and heir of the Piast from Oldrich's hands. And in return for all these boons, the iniquitous father refused to aid his lawful and loyal senior, offended his majesty by scheming with enemies of the state and trying to win over the king's supporters to his side.

The image is simply too sharp and one-sided to be believable. And it is not because we would seek to justify Boleslav's conduct at any cost. After all, Thietmar's account itself shows a number of cracks in the otherwise solidly constructed edifice of his arguments.

The most important in this case is the fact that the bishop failed to even mention the presence of Oldrich in the capital of his own diocese. Meanwhile, as stipulated by the *Annals of Quedlinburg*, the Bohemian apparently arrived shortly after Boleslav Chrobry. The above inconsistency is intriguing enough to justify a more in-depth look at the country of the Premislid dynasty as it was at the time.

We know that in 1012, a coup took place in Prague. The younger brother of the duke of Bohemia Jaromir and Oldrich, until then exiled and forced to seek refuge in Poland, managed to depose the duke and take the throne for himself. It was now the older brother's turn to seek the protection of Boleslav Chrobry, but the Polish ruler preferred not to antagonize Oldrich by allowing the refugee at his court, and eventually Jaromir ended up in Germany. We do not know exactly where he finally found a safe haven. Thietmar mentions only that on August 12th 1012, the deposed duke resided in Giebichenstein at the court of the archbishop Walthard of Magdeburg. At that time, many German dignitaries would visit the dying archbishop to comfort him on his last passing. It has been suggested, therefore, that it was indeed to Walthard that Boleslav Chrobry had sent Jaromir, a supposition further strengthened by the information that a short time previously, the Polish ruler had held peace negotiations with the very same archbishop.<sup>91</sup>

Among those absent in Giebichenstein, as is particularly noteworthy since Thietmar himself also makes that observation, was the bishop Eid of Meissen. The post of the ordinary of Meissen was at that time still connected with certain authority over Bohemia, partly through the geographical location of

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<sup>90</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 445, (6,55).

<sup>91</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 411, (6,69), see there notes nos. 371, 382.

the castle and partly due to historically conditioned traditions.<sup>92</sup> In close vicinity of Eid's diocese was Milzeni, from where Boleslav Chrobry strove to extend his influence in Saxony. In fact, the ordinary of Meissen was geographically Boleslav's closest German neighbour, and one that enjoyed great reverence at the Piast court.<sup>93</sup> Therefore it seems just as likely that Jaromir could have been sent to stay with Eid. However, the question of who exactly offered refuge to the exiled Premislid is not the most important issue in this case; what is far more significant is the fact that Boleslav decided not to challenge Oldrich, towards whom he had certain political expectations strengthened by the fact that the Premislid himself had previously sought protection at the court of the Polish Duke. The actual nature of these expectations can be deduced by comparing the state of affairs described above with that from before 1002. At that time, Boleslav had a certain—possibly formalised—authority or patronage over Boleslav III the Red of Bohemia. In any case, even Thietmar, despite his open aversion towards the Piast, admits that after 1015 there had already been a significant discrepancy in terms of influence and position in the hierarchy of power between the Polish ruler and the Bohemian duke.<sup>94</sup>

It seems that for Boleslav Chrobry the decisions reached during the talks with Henry II in Merseburg were related to the restitution of the state of affairs from 1002–1004 when he had had said formal authority over Bohemia.<sup>95</sup> The Piast's aspirations stemmed from the grants he had once received from Otto III, which were aimed at preparing the grounds for his future enthronement. Boleslav Chrobry's actions were motivated by the ambition to conclude the process initiated in Gniezno, and although he was not formally entitled to wear a crown, his regal demeanour reflected the conduct of anointed rulers bearing royal insignia.<sup>96</sup> The whole issue is closely related to our analysis of the enigmatically depicted clash between the Polish and Bohemian rulers' aspirations and the standpoint of king Henry II, which manifested itself in 1013. There are certain facts to suggest, that in central Europe in those days, the title of king was associated not as much with an institutional transformation of the state, as historiography would often view it, but rather with the status and personal prestige of the individual honoured

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<sup>92</sup> Sobiesiak, *Bolesław II. Przemyślida*, p. 80ff.

<sup>93</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 499, (7,22).

<sup>94</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 293, (5,30).

<sup>95</sup> See: *Galli Anonymi Cronicae*, p. 16 c. 6, *Gesta principum Polonorum*, pp. 30–31; see: Tadeusz Wasilewski, "Czescy sufragani Bolesława Chrobrego a zagadnienia jego drugiej metropolii kościelnej", in *Spółczesność Polski Średniowiecznej*, vol. 5, pp. 35–44.

<sup>96</sup> More on this p. 2.2.; see also *Petri Damiani Vita*, p. 62, (c. 28).



with it. In territories of western Slavdom, the crown would have certainly been associated with a sort of an advantage, even authority of the bearer of said insignia, over other states in the region.<sup>97</sup> The above can be exemplified by several facts which, although later than the discussed events, structurally reflect the situation in question.

As recently observed by Zbigniew Dalewski, the ceremonial protocol observed while welcoming Boleslav III Wrymouth as he attended the congress of Merseburg in 1135 reflected in nearly every detail the customary welcome received in those days by anointed kings.<sup>98</sup> Similarly in the same year, the Piast ruler was welcomed in Magdeburg in a manner befitting royalty by the German monarch, Lothar III of Supplinburg himself.<sup>99</sup> In the mentioned researcher's opinion, everything seems to indicate the German ruler's intention to crown Wrymouth. Dalewski goes as far as to observe, on the basis of his research, that swearing an oath of fealty and bearing the German monarch's sword by Boleslav III, the rituals once treated by historiography as disparaging coronation ambitions, constituted in fact a stage in the process of the Piast's royal ascent to be granted by the emperor.<sup>100</sup>

The plan eventually failed, however, due to strong objection voiced by duke Sobeslav of Bohemia.<sup>101</sup> And the grounds for the protest could not have been trivial as Lothar accepted the objection. One possible explanation for the Premislid's behaviour, based on our knowledge of the then circumstance, would be his fear of the Polish ruler's influence becoming too great. Notably, until 1125 Sobeslav had stayed in Poland under the protection of the Polish ruler. Additionally empowered by the prestige of the royal title, Boleslav III could therefore attempt to treat the Bohemian duke as his political subordinate.<sup>102</sup>

The situation described above seems to closely reflect the general circumstances that we have observed in relation to the congress of 1013.

The matter of the rivalry between Poland and Bohemia in their attempts to win the crown (and the continued policy of the empire to intensify the competition and prevent any of the sides from gaining the upper hand), as well

<sup>97</sup> More on this chapter 2.1 and 3.3. of this book.

<sup>98</sup> Zbigniew Dalewski, "Polityka, rytuał i tekst", in *Źródło. Teksty o kulturze średniowiecza ofiarowane Bronisławowi Geremekowi*, ed. Wojciech Brojer (Warszawa, 2003), pp. 11–35, p. 24.

<sup>99</sup> Dalewski, Dalewski, "Kaiser Lothar III., Soběslav I".

<sup>100</sup> Zbigniew Dalewski, "Zjazd w Merseburgu w 1135 roku", in *Ludzie—Kościół—Wierzenia. Studia z dziejów kultury i społeczeństwa Europy Środkowej (średniowiecze—wczesna epoka nowożytna)*, eds. Wojciech Iwańczak, Stefan K. Kuczyński (Warszawa, 2001), pp. 429–443.

<sup>101</sup> Dalewski, "Kaiser Lothar III., Soběslav I", pp. 317–336.

<sup>102</sup> *Cosmae Pragensis Chronica*, p. 203, (3,32).

as the question of the actual meaning of the insignia in those days, constitute a very broad issue that has aroused considerable controversy over the years due to the scarceness of sources. As such it is particularly difficult to subject it to a systematic and comprehensive analysis. As we should somehow try to limit these deliberations to only the key issues pertaining to our discussion, we will only draft several of the most prominent examples to illustrate the above tendency. Let us consider a very particular phenomenon that persisted throughout the 11th and 12th centuries. Not once were the rulers of Poland and Bohemia kings at the same time. And even more importantly, whenever one of the countries received the crown, it would almost automatically put forward claims of some sort of superiority over the other.

As we have already discussed the cases of Boleslav Chrobry and Boleslav III, let us now focus on the Premislid dynasty. The first ruler mentioned in source texts to have undertaken efforts that could have potentially gained him the crown was Bretislav I (1034–1055). It was not an accident that the duke, in an attempt to exploit the crisis of Power in Poland, tried to destroy the central lands of his political adversaries, Greater Poland, by burning down its main keeps and seizing the relics of St Adalbert which he hoped to use for the establishment of the archdiocese of Prague. However, his actions met with strong opposition from Germany: Conrad II and later Henry III supported Casimir the Restorer (son of Mieszko II) and Bohemia suffered a series of destructive incursions by the imperial armies.

Vratislaus II (d. 1092), the first Premislid monarch to be anointed as king, was said to have become the monarch of not only Bohemia, but also Poland. Although a number of historians question the words of chronicler Cosmas who reported on the events sometime after 1100, but it cannot be denied that the account, whether true to the legal state of affairs or not, certainly reflected the Bohemian elites' perception of Vratislaus's reign.<sup>103</sup>

Of the next Bohemian king, Vladislaus II of Bohemia, we no longer hear that he wished to be titled the king of Poland, although several traces of the monarch's attempts to manifest his superiority over the Piast dynasty did

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<sup>103</sup> The thing is intriguing as much as during the rule of Vratislav II a document was written in the emperor's chancellery. It described the alleged borders of the bishopric of Prague from the time of St. Adalbert (982–997), including the whole southern part of Poland: Barbara Krzemińska—Dušan Treštitik, "O dokumencie biskupstwa praskiego z 1086 r.," *SZ* 5 (1960), 79–88; Rudolf Turek, "Listina Jindřicha IV. z 29. dubna 1086 (DH IV, 390) a její terytoria", *SA* 22 (1975), 69–120; Ludmil Hauptmann, "Das Regensburger Privileg von 1086 für das Bistum Prag", *MIÖG* 62 (1954), 146–154.

survive.<sup>104</sup> Even the text of the so called Bull of Sicily issued by Frederick II to Ottakar I of Bohemia in 1212, which confirmed the hereditary monarchy of the Premislid dynasty and determined its status within the empire, also mentioned the Bohemian king's position of authority over Polish rulers.<sup>105</sup>

We should now return to the unfinished thread of our analysis pertaining to the events that took place in Merseburg in 1013, and observe that the state of affairs depicted by chroniclers in that year was intriguingly similar to that of 1003, already described herein. In both cases, the territorial basis for the attempt to gain some sort of control over the Premislid state was constituted by the Piast settling himself in Lusatia. The same may also have provided the reason for Emnilde accompanying her husband to Merseburg in order to support his claims with her authority as the heiress of count Dobromir, whose lands must have been located somewhere in the region. Barring the principle of inheritance, it seems difficult to find a viable explanation for, on the one hand, the incessant efforts and often violent wars waged by the Piasts over the control of these lands, and on the other, the fact that Henry II actually granted—if reluctantly—the fief of Milzeni and Lusatia to Boleslav Chrobry on three separate occasions.<sup>106</sup>

In both 1002 and 1013, the German monarch held nominal authority over the Piast; at the same time, Boleslav who held the fief of a territory within the German king's domain stood among the most eminent lords in the empire. From the Polish ruler's perspective, the arrangement needed confirmation in the form of Henry II's promise to offer him the crown. In return, Boleslav pledged to aid the king in his efforts in Italy, which, when successful, would secure the emperor's crown for the Bavarian along with the formal authority to anoint kings.<sup>107</sup> The Piast's new status would not, as evidenced by other examples, in any way free him from the obligations to the empire.<sup>108</sup> Instead, the key consequence of said change would be Boleslav gaining a form of patronage over Bohemia.

Therefore, Oldrich had every right to be concerned, as did Sobieslav a hundred years later. The Bohemian duke convinced Henry II to back down

<sup>104</sup> Josef Žemlicka, "Rane feudální monarchie a královský titul u západních Slovanů", in *Typologie raně feudálních slovanských států*, ed. Josef Žemlicka (Praha, 1987), pp. 77–90.

<sup>105</sup> Martin Wihoda, "Polská koruna českých králů", *Český Časopis Historický* 102 (2004), 721–744, p. 722f.

<sup>106</sup> Korta, "Milsko i Łużyce", p. 155ff.

<sup>107</sup> Heinrich Patze, "Die Pegaer Annalen, die Königserhebung Vratislavs von Böhmen und die Anfänge der Stadt Pegau", *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* 12 (1963), 1–62.

<sup>108</sup> More on this chapter 3.3 of this book.

from the promised concessions to Boleslav Chrobry. The Polish ruler, either unaware of Oldrich's negotiations in Merseburg, or convinced that having accommodated the Bohemian at his court he had secured the latter's loyalty, sent Mieszko, an imperial vassal no less, to negotiate something in Bohemia. Thietmar claims that Boleslav wanted to form an alliance against Henry II, but we must not forget that the suggestion was made *post factum*, i.e. already after the breakout of a new war, and as such it served to justify the actions of the German ruler.

The abduction of Mieszko II took place, all evidence seems to support it, before the king's military expedition to Italy in the autumn of 1013. As a consequence, the Piast ruler refused to send the promised levy of troops to Henry's aid and instead began a campaign against him among German lords. It would appear that he had sufficient arguments to support his claims to have hoped to convince the nobles.

Our only source of information on the events, i.e. Thietmar's chronicle is, as we have already observed, rather deceptive. The author allowed himself to freely choose and compile facts that would ultimately create their "proper" depiction in accordance with his own interpretation.<sup>109</sup> It is therefore difficult to conclusively establish when exactly Boleslav Chrobry's son was detained. The chronicler gives away a hint of detail saying that Mieszko II, on Henry's orders, was held in Germany for a particularly long time—we do not, however, know what period that actually represents. Thietmar also writes that count Hodo, his keeper, had ample time to make friends with the detainee.<sup>110</sup> The German king set off to gain his crown in Italy in October 1013 and remained there until the beginning of summer the following year. He did not return to Merseburg until late autumn 1014. Only then would he have been able to order Mieszko II's release. Therefore, a period of roughly two years (autumn of 1013—autumn of 1015) would seem a probable estimate, and would also account for Boleslav Chrobry's anger and the anxiety of those of German nobles who opted for peace with Poland and who had pled for the imprisoned Piast's freedom.<sup>111</sup>

To conclude this section of our deliberations, we should note that some members of Saxon nobility advised Henry II to intervene on Mieszko II's behalf as he was held captive in Bohemia, and later to allow Boleslav's son to return home. Bishop Gero of Magdeburg himself advocated such a course

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<sup>109</sup> James Fentress, Chris Wickham, *Social Memory* (Oxford 1992), 144ff.

<sup>110</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 495, (7,18).

<sup>111</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 485, (7,12).

of action and even Thietmar did not seem to contest it. The fact could suggest that in the nobles' opinion Mieszko's capture had not been due to some machinations aimed against Henry II, as our chronicler would have it, but resulted from other causes entirely. It would also seem that a faction of German elites agreed with Boleslav's political postulates, as put forward in 1013 in Merseburg, and therefore later disagreed with the course of action taken by their monarch. A number of lords became involved in support of the Piast cause to such an extent that they actually vouched with their property for Mieszko II, as a guarantee that Boleslav Chrobry would not wage another war—in this case the bishop of Merseburg suspected downright bribery by the Polish ruler.<sup>112</sup> All in all, however, Thietmar's account can safely be said to be somewhat inconsistent. On the one hand, he insists that the Polish duke himself had violated the principle of feudal solidarity stemming from the oath of fealty towards Henry II taken by the Piasts in 1013, while on the other, his neutral, possibly even slightly favourable attitude towards Mieszko, which can be read into the passage informing us of the mentioned support from German nobles, suggests that even the chronicler himself believed that his monarch was still obliged to stand in the defence of Mieszko II, a royal vassal in peril.

### 3.1.3 *Mieszko II—the "Civilised" Duke*

There is a passage in Thietmar's work which demonstrates particularly well the author's favourable disposition towards Mieszko II. It constitutes a part of a more general section of the chronicle describing Henry II's military action against the Piasts during the campaign which started in August 1015. Let us have a closer look at the specific wording of that particular part of the bishop's work.

In the opening passage, Thietmar informs us that the German monarch, having broken through Polish defences in Lusatia and after crossing the river Oder, sought to convince the son to surrender and discontinue fighting on his father's side. Henry II

sent a delegation, composed of the leading men of his army, who reminded Miesco of his oath to the emperor<sup>113</sup> and unanimously asked that they might not lose their property on his account, this having been anticipated by his surrender.<sup>114</sup> He responded to them with the following words: 'I concede that the

<sup>112</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 483ff., (7,12).

<sup>113</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 492f. (7,17)—see there commentary by Jedlicki in note 133.

<sup>114</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 492f. (7,17)—see there commentary by Jedlicki in note 134.

emperor rescued me from the power of my enemies and that I promised you my loyalty. I would willingly fulfill that promise, if I were free. At present, however, as you yourselves know, I am subject to my father's dominion and he has forbidden this. Nor would it be permitted by his milites, who are here with me. Hence, I must reluctantly decline. To the best of my ability, I will defend this land which belongs to me, but is desired by you. When my father arrives, I will try to win him over to the emperor's favour and to friendship with you.<sup>115</sup>

The quoted account, at parts seeming somewhat naive, has often been interpreted as an literal quotation of Mieszko II's declarations.<sup>116</sup> But in reality, they are merely Thietmar's own words expressing his opinion about the duke's conduct. Admittedly, they were likely based on some facts. Possibly someone recounted their experiences from the war against Poland as well as from previous negotiations with Boleslav Chrobry's son, whom the king's delegation tried to sway away from his father's conflict. However, the bishop of Merseburg certainly did not compose his notes in the heat of the battle, did not record actual events taking place in his presence. For all we know he possibly did not accompany the army to Poland; and even if he had, he still would have composed his account a long time after the actual events, in the privacy of his chambers in the episcopal palace.<sup>117</sup> His text is not a spontaneous record of personally witnessed occurrences, but rather a fairly coherent, well thought-through structure—the product of an intellectual construct that had taken shape in the author's mind. And the fragment mentioned above surely falls into this pattern.

Regardless of how we understand the passage, Thietmar's words rather overtly express the chronicler's respect towards the young Piast. Moreover, quite importantly, his opinions emphasizing the courtly manner and certain cultivation of Mieszko II would appeal to the majority of readers to whom his work was addressed. Otherwise, other events recounted by the chronicler would sound somewhat insincere, like for instance a passage concerning the

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<sup>115</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 318; Thietmar, p. 493 (7,17): [Imperator] *optimos ab exercitu ad Misonem ibi turmatim sedentem misit, ut eum de promissa sibi fide ammonerent et, ne propter eum ab imperatore sua perderent bona, cum dedicione sua preoccupare voluisset, unanimiter rogarent. Quibus is talibus respondit: 'Agnosco me gratia cesaris ab inimici potestate ereptum [ac] vobis fidem promisisse; et eam libenter in omnibus adimplerem, si liber existerem. Nunc autem, ut ipsi scitis, sum mei patris dominio subditus et, quia ille hoc prohibet et sui milites hic modo presentes talia fieri non paciuntur, invitus omitto. Patriam, quam queritis, meam, si possum, defendere usque [ad] adventum.*

<sup>116</sup> Weinfurter, *Heinrich II. (1002–1024)*, p. 219; the matter is discussed more thoroughly by: Görich, *Eine Wende im Osten*, p. 138ff.; see also: Grabski, *Boleslaw Chrobry. Zarys*, p. 218ff.

<sup>117</sup> Thietmar, p. 32ff. (Introduction).

dukes friendship with count Hodo,<sup>118</sup> or the already discussed mention of Saxon nobility's favourable disposition towards Boleslav Chrobry's son.

A passage of Thietmar's chronicle directly following the one discussed above, documenting the subsequent episodes of the Polish-German war of 1015, is also very significant to our analysis. After Mieszko II refused to surrender to the emperor, Henry II's army attacked the Polish troops commanded by the young duke which were positioned past Crossen on the Oder.<sup>119</sup> As Thietmar describes it,

the emperor crossed the Oder and crushed the resistance of the Polish multitude [3 August]. We had no losses, except for that famous youth, Hodo, along with Eckerich and another dependant of Count Gunzelin. The emperor had accused this Hodo and Siegfried, the son of Margrave Hodo, of having been too familiar with Boleslav [...]. Miesco's tears flowed freely when he recognized the corpse of the man [i.e. Hodo] who had been his guardian and companion during his period of captivity. After showing every concern for the body, he returned it to our army.<sup>120</sup>

We could observe that the quoted passage provides a very fitting illustration of the general style employed by Thietmar in his narration. We first read that the emperor 'crushed the Polish resistance', while just a moment later—since it was Mieszko and his troops that came across the bodies of dead German knights—the chronicler evidently documents the fact that Polish troops must have withdrawn in some sort of an organised fashion. However, it is not that aspect of the account that is of greatest interest to us. Instead, we should focus on the mentioned distress of the Piast and his tears shed over the bodies of dead Saxon warriors.

The passage can be interpreted in a multitude of ways. In the past, rather strange opinions have been voiced depreciating the young Piast's aptitude for political rule due to his allegedly too "soft" or even "unmanly" character.<sup>121</sup> Most researchers, however, choose to simply pass over the account, treating the matter as seemingly obvious and natural: a youth recognises his former companions, and weeps for them despite them being his current enemies.<sup>122</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Geary, *Phantoms of Remembrance*, p. 134f.

<sup>119</sup> Thietmar, p. 495 (7,18).

<sup>120</sup> *The 'Chronicon'*, p. 318; Thietmar, p. 495 (7,18): ...*et nemo ex nostris nisi Hodo inditus iuvenis cum Ekkrico et alio Guncelini comitis satellite cetidit. Hic cum Sigifrido, Hodonis filio marchionis, ab imperatore accusatus, eo quod Bolizlovo nimis familiaris actenus fuisset, [...]. Sed cum Miesco eiusdem corpus cognosceret, quia eius apud nos fuerat custos et sodalis, multum flevit et id bene procuratum ad exercitum misit;*—RGSEO IV, p. 45f., no. 495.

<sup>121</sup> The question described in: Labuda, *Mieszko II. Król*, p. 7ff.

<sup>122</sup> E.g.: Grabski, *Bolesław Chrobry. Zarys*, p. 220; Labuda, *Mieszko II. Król*, p. 56.

More recent research has indicated, however, that the rather laconic description of the duke's tears carried along much deeper meanings and associations, ones that would have been obvious to both Thietmar and his readers at the time. For we must not forget that the passage in question is again not an account of factual events—after all, how could the bishop of Merseburg even have known about a few tears shed by the commander of the opposing army? Rather, the fragment constitutes a certain declaration expressing the author's explicit and clearly defined opinions on Mieszko II.

Our brief overview of the relatively common phenomenon should begin with the most general observation: both historiographic sources and literary texts from the early Middle Ages indisputably evidence that public crying in a certain, in fact rather broad, set of circumstances was not treated as a sign of weakness, lack of self-discipline, or other similar flaws. On the contrary, the inclination for plaintive behaviour was quite typical of positive heroes in those stories. Naturally, source texts must always be taken with a pinch of salt,<sup>123</sup> however, it was common to portray all great men as capable of crying: the same held true not just for men of the Church such as missionaries and bishops, but also eminent monarchs or great commanders.<sup>124</sup> Even if we accept that the accounts followed a certain stylistic pattern, they still demonstrate the existence of a certain norm of behaviour observed by the elites, which seemed to attach a lot of importance to public displays of emotion. And although an in-depth analysis of each respective example to the above would exceed the framework of our discussion in this particular work, even a brief look at some of the cases in point should allow an interesting insight into the character of the phenomenon in question.

As reported by Einhard, even Charles the Great himself wept in sadness as he found out of his oldest son's passing and when he was informed of Pope Adrian's death.<sup>125</sup> In the "Song of Roland", Charles reacts to his nephew's

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<sup>123</sup> We guess a certain stylization of the authors, some exaggeration in their descriptions of people outpouring with grief. On the other hand, there are views that such ostentatious and theatrical behaviour, particularly in some cultural circles, was considered to be a standard—Martin J. Schubert, *Zur Theorie des Gebarens im Mittelalter. Analyse von nichtsprachlicher Äußerung in mittelhochdeutscher Epik. Rolandslied, Eneasroman, Tristan*, Kölner Germanistische Studien 31 (Köln – Wien, 1991), p. 96ff.

<sup>124</sup> Matthias Becher, "Cum lacrimis et gemitu' Vom Weinen der Sieger und der Besiegten im frühen und hohem Mittelalter", in *Formen und Funktionen*, pp. 25–52, p. 47; see also: Gerd Althoff, "Tränen", *FMS* 30 (1996), 60–79; and: Gerd Althoff, "Der König weint. Ritueller Tränen in öffentlicher Kommunikation", in *"Aufführung" und "Schrift" in Mittelalter und Früher Neuzeit*, Germanistische Symposien. Berichtsbände 17, ed. Jan-Dirk Müller (Stuttgart – Weimar, 1996), pp. 239–252.

<sup>125</sup> *Einhardi Vita Karoli*, p. 190, (c. 19).



anger in the following way: “with lowered front doth stand, he tugs his beard, his chin in his hand, tears fill his eyes, he cannot them command”.<sup>126</sup> Also the hero of the newly forming German state, Otto I, was not ashamed to cry publicly when news reached him of the deaths of his son Liudolf<sup>127</sup> and mother Mathilda.<sup>128</sup>

There is also a religious aspect to the phenomenon discussed above. Regret and tears were after all an element of the most basic repertoire of a good Christian’s behaviour. Theological treatises of the day strongly emphasize the need for “shedding tears” (*effusio lacrymarum*), which was believed to be one of the twelve paths to the “remission of sins” (*remissio peccatorum*).<sup>129</sup> Regino of Prüm believed that every sinner, in order to redeem his soul, ought to humble himself through tears of deep repentance, without which penance would be meaningless.<sup>130</sup> Also the ideal of a truly Christian ruler in those days required the monarch to perform acts accompanied by the “shedding of tears”. The perfect exemplar would be the biblical king David who tried to wash away the sin of seducing Bathsheba through prayer, fasting and tears.<sup>131</sup>

Therefore, it seems that the interpretation of Thietmar’s description of Mieszko II’s behaviour as an act of repentance would be rather implausible—nothing in the quoted passage justifies such farfetched reading of the chronicler’s intentions. At the same time, we should point out that the gesture attributed to the Polish duke must have related—for both Thietmar and his readers—to a certain trait of “softness”, which would have been seen as a manifestation of being civilised.<sup>132</sup> The material conveyed in the initial section of these deliberations (I.1) clearly evidences that the intellectual circles of those days perceived people and communities deprived of this certain gentleness of manner as crude, savage and cruel “barbarians”.<sup>133</sup> It is also noteworthy that Thietmar, although reluctantly and somewhat bitterly, often

<sup>126</sup> *The Song of Roland. An Analytical Edition*, vol. 2: *Text*, ed. Gerard J. Brault (London, 1978), p. 50.

<sup>127</sup> *Widukind*, p. 164, (3,58).

<sup>128</sup> *Die Lebensbeschreibungen der Königin Mathilde*, ed. Bernd Schütte, MGH SS RG 66 (Hannover, 1994), p. 140 (c. 15).

<sup>129</sup> Becher, “Cum lacrimis et gemitu”, p. 33; Gerd Althoff, “Empörung, Tränen, Zerknirschung ‘Emotionen’ in der öffentlichen Kommunikation des Mittelalters”, *FMS* 30 (1996), 60–79.

<sup>130</sup> Becher, “Cum lacrimis et gemitu”, p. 33; *Das Senhandbuch des Regino*, p. 158 (1,303), p. 168 (1,304), p. 200 (1,298), p. 252 (2,6).

<sup>131</sup> Becher, “Cum lacrimis et gemitu”, p. 35.

<sup>132</sup> Althoff, “Der König weint. Rituelle”, pp. 239–252; also: Johannes Fried, “Ritual und Vernunft—Traum und Pendel des Thietmar von Merseburg”, in *Das Jahrtausend im Spiegel der Jahrhundertwenden*, ed. Lothar Gall (Berlin, 1999), pp. 15–63, p. 39ff.

<sup>133</sup> Fraesdorf, *Der barbarischen Norden*, p. 270f.

enriching his descriptions with ironical commentaries, admits that even Boleslav Chrobry was not incapable of showing mercy and respect to his defeated enemies, as well as feeling remorse at their deaths.<sup>134</sup>

As has already been observed in this chapter, Thietmar's feelings towards Boleslav Chrobry's son were quite different from those reserved for his father. The quoted passages indicate that the chronicler had significant respect for Mieszko II, wanted to believe him a civilised man. Therefore, one can but wonder, in the context of above deliberations, where the favourable disposition of the bishop of Merseburg had originated from?

In an attempt to answer the question, we should disregard the seemingly most obvious solution: that the attitude of the bishop of Merseburg can be interpreted in the context of the Piast's family relations to the foremost aristocratic circles in Germany. After all, the chronicler utterly ignores the fact of Mieszko II's marriage to Richeza. Naturally, Thietmar must have been aware of the matrimony and it was bound to have influenced his way of thinking in some way. However, since he chose not to include it in his account, we can assume that the marriage was not a source of positive reflections for him.

At the same time, Thietmar's emphasis on the theme of Emnilde, Mieszko II's mother and her father Dobromir seems significant. It is in this line of thought, the only apparent source of the chronicler's positive attitude to the Piast duke, that we can trace the reasons for the relative reverence shown towards Boleslav Chrobry's son. Although such a conclusion may seem somewhat farfetched considering the relative briefness of the account in question, particularly since our claims are based solely on our interpretation of the chronicler's fairly vague comments rather than his actual statements, the proposed reading of the available information is supported by a number of facts. It cannot be denied that traditional societies put a lot of value in family relations. At times, it even took the form of certain "magic of blood", a belief shared, as has been well documented, by the chronicler's countrymen in the discussed period.<sup>135</sup> Thietmar, as observed above, noticed and respected Emnilde, and was in consequence rather favourably disposed towards Mieszko himself, for as he perceived it, the duke had inherited her blood ties to Saxon aristocracy.

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<sup>134</sup> *Thietmar*, p. 345, (6,22); p. 499, (7,22).

<sup>135</sup> Hauck, "Geblütsheiligkeit", pp. 187–240; also: Roman Michałowski, "Świadomość saskiej grupy rządzącej w wiekach X–XI. 'Nobilis, dives, pauper'—próba analizy semiotycznej", *SZ* 19 (1974), 13–28; Bildhauer, *Medieval Blood*, pp. 133ff.

There is also another aspect of the matter which ought to be mentioned in this context. The personality traits attributed to Boleslav Chrobry's son by the chronicler: the certain gentleness of character, his courtly and friendly manner, would serve to somehow "civilise" Mieszko and include him in the scope of cultural principles valued by the readers of Thietmar's work. It is also significant that the tendency observed in the bishop's chronicle provides evidence to confirm that many years before the so called *Letter from Mathilda*,<sup>136</sup> a text glorifying the Christian qualities of Mieszko II, a similar attitude towards the Piast ruler existed among German elites, after all very different from the social circles of the duchess of Lorraine (the author of said *Letter*).

### 3.2 REX INVICTISSIMUS<sup>137</sup>—MIESZKO II IN MATHILDA'S CODEX

It is quite a paradox that the earliest and one of the most beautiful portrayals of a medieval Polish ruler in his full royal splendour was written in Germany, a country perceived by our traditional historiography as an adamant enemy of the Piast dynasty's regal aspirations. The so called *Mathilda's Codex* constitutes a complex and comprehensive depiction of Mieszko II portrayed against the idealised image of a perfect monarch.<sup>138</sup> Most interestingly, however, apart from literary stylisation, the text also bears traces of the author's genuine familiarity with the authoritative ostentation and regal accomplishments of the Piast kings: Boleslav Chrobry and his son.

The codex was a gift from duchess Matilda of Lotharingia to Mieszko II<sup>139</sup> and comprises several separate parts. Its main section consists of a selection of model liturgies organised chronologically to reflect their celebration throughout the year, along with an explanation for meaning underlying the particular types of services—a so called *Liber officiorum*<sup>140</sup> whose authorship was once attributed to Alcuin.<sup>141</sup> In the text, we also find a special prayer,

<sup>136</sup> More on this in the next part of this book.

<sup>137</sup> This formula was used to determine the person of Mieszko II in the inscription letter of Mathilda's Codex—*Codex Mathildis*, p. 139.

<sup>138</sup> Although we can find in the work by Gallus Anonymous the description of the royal splendour of Boleslav the Brave, it has the nature of a story, not a coherent presentation—*Galli Anonimi Cronica*, p. 16ff. (1,6); *Gesta principum Polonorum*, p. 30ff.

<sup>139</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, p. 140—see also: Labuda, *Mieszko II. Król*, p. 62ff.

<sup>140</sup> Edition in *Codex Mathildis*, pp. 147–273; commentary: Bogdan Bolz, Brygida Kürbis, Bogusław Nadolski, "Liber officiorum", in *Codex Mathildis*, pp. 90–127.

<sup>141</sup> Bolz, Kürbis, Nadolski, "Liber officiorum"; see also: Czesław Deptuła, "List Matyldy Lotaryńskiej a kwestia konfliktu Mieszka II z benedyktynami", *Summarum* 2 (1973), 199–202.

a so called sequence: inc. *Ad celebris rex cęlice*,<sup>142</sup> where apart from Christ, angels, particularly Archangel Michael, are praised and extolled. Immediately after the prayer, the text continues with a dedicational letter from duchess Mathilda (named as the founder of the tome) to Mieszko II—inc.: *Domino M. uirtutis uere cultori*.<sup>143</sup> The text was also accompanied by a miniature portrait of the duchess as well as an image of king Mieszko II (quite unique among the representations of early rulers of Poland as it depicted the whole figure rather than only the bust of the monarch).<sup>144</sup>

The text of the sequence prayer and the letter, as well as the miniature presenting the duchess and the Polish king, were almost certainly selected to match the context of the *Liber officiorum*. The four works jointly communicate a fairly consistent message that Mathilda intended to put forward to Mieszko II. The above fact must be taken into account in the course of any, particularly historical, analysis of the codex.

To date, researchers have devoted their interest mostly to the dedicational letter, mainly due to its original wording and direct reference to the Polish king himself. The miniature was regrettably lost sometime in the mid 19th century<sup>145</sup> and thus—despite several surviving copies of the portrait as well as a detailed description of its composition which includes a specification of the colours used—has received less attention from historians, although several studies have also been conducted on the work.<sup>146</sup> The main body of text in the codex, comprising a selection of model liturgies, remained unavailable to researchers for many years as it disappeared in mid 19th c. only to resurface nearly a hundred and fifty years later in a storeroom of the Düsseldorf university library.<sup>147</sup> Several years ago, the full text of Mathilda's Codex was published along with critical commentaries pertaining to its contents—including the theological basis for the formulas employed therein—by a team under

<sup>142</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, pp. 137–138; see commentary: Brygida Kürbis, “Sekwencja ‘Ad celebris rex cęlicae’”, in *Codex Mathildis*, pp. 35–48; or: Brygida Kürbis, “Studia nad Kodeksem Matyldy, cz. I: Sekwencja Ad celebris rex cęlicae”, *SZ* 27 (1983), 97–112.

<sup>143</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, pp. 139–140—also: Brygida Kürbis, “Die Epistola Mathildis Suevae an Mieszko II. in neuer Sicht”, in *Na progach historii*, vol. 1, pp. 344–367, p. 366f.

<sup>144</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, pp. 143–145; see also: Eckhard Preise, Marcus Weidner, “Auf der Suche nach der verschollenen Widmungsminiatur des Cod. C 91 der Düsseldorfer Universitätsbibliothek”, in *Na progach historii*, vol. 1 (Poznań, 1994), pp. 367–372; Jerzy Pietrusiński, “*Epistola Mathildis Suevae*. O zaginioniej miniaturze”, *SZ* 26 (1981), 53–72.

<sup>145</sup> Brygida Kürbis, “Rękopis”, p. 25ff.

<sup>146</sup> Pietrusiński, “*Epistola Mathildis Suevae*”, p. 58; Florentine Mütterich, “*Epistola Mathildis Suevae*. Zu einer verschollenen Handschrift aus dem 11. Jahrhundert”, *SZ* 26 (1981), 73–78.

<sup>147</sup> Universitäts—und Landesbibliothek Düsseldorf, sign. C 91.—Kürbis, “Rękopis”, p. 9, 13ff.

the auspices of Brygida Kürbis, a prominent and meritorious researcher from Poznań.<sup>148</sup>

From the perspective of our interest in the perception of Piast rulers in 11th c. Germany, it seems particularly important to extract deeper meanings from the composition of the codex in its entirety, rather than settle on analysing only its individual literary parts or the miniatures alone. To begin our discussion, however, we must first focus on locating and parsing the sources of relevant information scattered throughout each of the particular parts of the codex.

### 3.2.1 *Archangel Michael—Field Commander of the Army of God and Satan’s Adversary*

Let us then begin with the first section of the work. In the introduction to the codex (folios 1v and 2 r),<sup>149</sup> before the letter and the miniature, we come across a special form of a liturgical hymn, *Ad celebres rex cęlice*,<sup>150</sup>—dating back to pre-Trident times—a so called sequence prayer. The passage, apart from conveying an invocation to Christ—the Lord of the Heavens, puts a particular emphasis on the relations and forms of mediation between the choirs of angels and people on earth. A particular eminence in this respect is attributed to Archangel Michael, referred to as the celestial viceroy (*ęli satrapa*) and the hymn itself was meant to be sang during solemnities devoted to this saint.<sup>151</sup>

The mentioned prayer comprises the opening of the volume and would have been the very first passage viewed by any reader of the codex. Therefore, it could not have possibly been chosen at random or without some special underlying purpose. We do know that the sequence prayer along with the applicable musical annotations was written down by a copyist who did not

<sup>148</sup> *Codex Mathildis*; see also rev. by: Roman Michałowski, “Kodeks Matyldy. Księga obrzędów z kartami dedykacyjnymi, opracowanie i edycja Brygida Kürbis z zespołem: Bogdan Bolz, Bogusław Nadolski SChr, Danuta Zydorek, Polska Akademia Umiejętności, Monumenta Sacra Polonorum, t. 1, Kraków 2000, p. 287, indeksy, il.”, *SZ* 40 (2002), 225–228.

<sup>149</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, p. 137f.

<sup>150</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, p. 137f., p. 35ff.

<sup>151</sup> Kürbis, “Sekwencja *Ad celebres*”, p. 35f.; see also: Callahan, “The Cult of St. Michael”, p. 182ff.; Archangel Michael was also worshipped by Gertruda, Mieszko II’s and Richeza’s daughter. In her prayers he was addressed as *princeps noster*—Brygida Kürbis, “Modlitwy księżnej Gertrudy z *Psalterium Egberti*. Przyczynek do dziejów kultury dworu panującego w Polsce i na Rusi”, in *Na progach historii*, vol. 1, pp. 250–258, p. 256; see also: Teresa Michałowska, ‘*Ego Gertruda*’. *Studium historycznoliterackie* (Warszawa, 2010), p. 45ff., pp. 242, 245.

put his hand to any of the subsequent parts of the volume.<sup>152</sup> On this basis we can assume that the main sections of the codex, including the dedicational letter, which were all written by a single copyist with only a little help from two other contributors,<sup>153</sup> were compiled earlier. Apparently, a fitting introduction was selected in order to refer to the actual date on which the volume was to be gifted to Mieszko II. However, for the gift to eventually reach its addressee, the copyists and binders would have had to receive their commissions a good several months in advance.

Neither the character of the discussed passage, nor any custom or tradition would seem to independently account for the decision to place the prayer as an introduction to the liturgical book. We can therefore assume that the use of this particular hymn by the author of the codex's structure was a means of conveying a certain meaning of importance to the editor himself, as well as, most likely, of expressing his intentions towards the recipient presented with the gift at a very particular moment in time.

The hymn in question details the celestial hierarchy of power, which comprised nine levels of angelic choirs accompanying God—a clear reference to the views of the so called Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite and the Christianised philosophy of Neo-Platonism.<sup>154</sup> The underlying meaning behind the fact of including said hierarchy in a message to Mieszko II, can, and indeed should be interpreted on a number of levels. Undoubtedly, the occurrence of the discussed motif at the beginning of the codex can be justified by the tendency among the theologians of the day to imply a certain relation between Christian monarchs and the hierarchy of Christ's authority as the universal king, believed to be—in a sense—the senior of all earthly rulers. Christian thinkers were particularly concerned with the structure of the Celestial Lord's court and devoted a significant part of their deliberations to the role of angels. There are many examples of religious texts, most commonly hymns, which stressed the special role of angels in providing a link between worldly rulers and their heavenly sovereign. It was also believed that these supernatural beings were under orders by the Lord of the universe to carry out special tasks on earth. They would constantly accompany medieval kings, often marching at the head of their processions.<sup>155</sup> Numerous

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<sup>152</sup> Hartmut Hoffmann, *Buchkunst und Königtum im ottonischen und frühsalischen Reich*, Schriften der MGH 30,1 (Stuttgart, 1986), p. 423, 433; Kürbis, "Rekopis", p. 11f.

<sup>153</sup> Kürbis, "Rekopis", p. 11f.

<sup>154</sup> There can be found also some traces of ideas of Johannes Scotus Eriugena—Kürbis, "Sekwencja *Ad celebris*", pp. 38, 40.

<sup>155</sup> The idea of a bond between the ruler and angels originated from a certain interpretation of the selected verses in the Holy Bible, whose meaning was understood as an allegoric

surviving works of art, notably paintings, depicted one or more angels serving as protectors or guardians of medieval monarchs—typically bearing their regalia, often also the king's weapon treated as part of said royal insignia.<sup>156</sup>

The depiction of celestial hierarchies of power on the very first pages of Mathilda's gift would serve the additional purpose of paving the way for the subsequent parts of the volume, which was also ordered in accordance with a certain gradation. In this way, the sequence prayer becomes a sort of preface to the later dedication detailing the royal virtues of Mieszko II. In a sense, it could also be treated as a particular preview for the miniature: a majestic portrait of the Polish ruler. One could further argue that to the initial passage relates, at least to a certain extent, to the main section of the volume comprising a selection of model liturgies. After all, according to the then ideal of a monarch, it was the king, Christ's own curate, who bore the responsibility for proper performance of God's service.<sup>157</sup>

From a more general perspective, it can be claimed that the use of said hymn in the codex was aimed at reminding the reader of the existence of the celestial hierarchy. And the character of the subsequent passages of the dedicational letter, retains that notion of having a connection with the sphere of sacrum, which legitimised the authority of the Piast monarch whose Christian virtues were being so highly praised in the text. In this sense, the third page of the volume provided a form of conclusion to this line of thought in portraying Mieszko II regally seated on his throne. In effect, the juxtaposi-

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adequacy of the re-occurring scheme: St John the Baptist preceded the arrival of the Saviour, thus an angel (angels) was to go before the monarch, who was regarded as the emanation or the curate of Christ. Therefore it was announced to the monarchs: "*In paradisum deducant te Angeli: in tuo adventu suscipiant te Martyres et perducant te in civitatem sanctam Ierusalem*"—see: Kantorowicz, *Selected Studies*, p. 38: *Ecce mitto angelum meum*—(Gen. 23, 20; Mal. 3, 1); and the words of John the Baptist—Mt. 11, 10; Mar. 1, 2; Luc. 7, 27—*Biblia Sacrae Vulgatae*, pp. 65; 914; 972; 992; 1019; Angenendt, *Geschichte der Religiosität*, p. 149f.

<sup>156</sup> See e.g.: Schramm, Berghaus, Gussone, *Die deutschen Kaiser*, tabl. 42—the hanging (antepedium) of the throne of Charles the Bald with the image of angels and the depiction of the bust of king's or—looking at the opposite edge of the period and continent—the likeness of the king-rider (the alleged portrait of Władysław Jagiello) from the chapel of the castle in Lublin: Anna Różycka-Bryzek, *Bizantyjsko-ruskie malowidła w kaplicy Zamku Lubelskiego* (Warszawa, 1983), p. 122.

<sup>157</sup> Angenendt, "Rex et sacerdos", pp. 100–118; Arnold Angenendt, "Karl der Grosse als 'rex et sacerdos'", in *Das Frankfurter Konzil von 794 Kristallisationspunkt karolingischer Kultur, Akten zweier Symposien (vom 23. bis 27. Februar und vom 13. bis 15. Oktober 1994) anlässlich der 1200-Jahrfeier der Stadt Frankfurt am Main*, ed. Rainer Berndt, Quellen und Abhandlungen zur mittelhochdeutschen Kirchengeschichte 80 (Frankfurt/Main, 1994), pp. 255–278; Fritz Kern, *Kingship and Law in the Middle Ages* (Oxford, 1956), p. 53 passim.

tion, as was typical of texts glorifying monarchs of the day,<sup>158</sup> emphasized the relation between the universal, celestial power and the earthly rule. The pattern of depicting the glory of Christ-king and his entourage: i.e. the various aspects of angelic powers as well as saints, and then proceeding to compare the image to the structures of secular authority in a worldly state, was standard practice in coronation prayers (*laudes regiae*)<sup>159</sup> whose equivalent, even if in an ideological rather than functional sense, was provided by the *Liber officiorum*.<sup>160</sup>

We may, however, venture yet another suggestion as to the significance of the sequence prayer in the volume offered to Mieszko II, derived from the fact that its main protagonist, next to Christ himself, was Archangel Michael. It is generally accepted that the cult of this particular saint, believed to be the viceroy of the heavens, commander of armies and closest confidant of Jesus Christ, enjoyed great popularity in Ottonian Germany and was not without influence in Poland either.<sup>161</sup> It may be noteworthy that only several years before the codex was compiled, namely in 1021, St. Michael the Archangel's monastery was founded in Bamberg. The complex was erected on Michelsberg mountain, in the vicinity of the local cathedral, as part of a grand foundation by emperor Henry II. It is possible that among scores of other eminent guests, Mieszko II also participated in the ceremony of the sanctuary's consecration.<sup>162</sup> After all, there is evidence suggesting a particular, devotional connection of the Piast with the monastery. The text of Bamberg monastery's obituary record bears an annotation of the king's name, a comment on his fellowship and the date of his death.<sup>163</sup> The related donation

<sup>158</sup> Michael Sierck, *Festtag und Politik. Studien zur Tageswahl karolingischer Herrscher* (Köln – Weimar – Wien, 1995), p. 408ff.; and above all: John M. Wallace—Hadrill, “The *Via Regia* of the Carolingian Age”, in *Trends in Medieval Political Thought*, eds. Beryl Smalley, Peter R. Lamont (Oxford, 1965), pp. 22–41, p. 24f.; see also iconography e.g.: Klaus Gamber, *Ecclesia Reginiensis*, *Studia Patristica et Liturgica* 8 (Regensburg, 1979), p. 167f.

<sup>159</sup> Ernst K. Kantorowicz, “*Laudes Regiae*”. *A Study in Liturgical Acclamations and Mediaeval Ruler Worship*, (Berkeley – Los Angeles, 1958), p. 14; see also: Brygida Kürbis, “Polskie *laudes Regiae* w Kronice Anonima Galla”, in “*Cultus et cognito*”. *Studia z dziejów średniowiecznej Kultury*, ed. Stefan K. Kuczyński et al. (Warszawa, 1976), pp. 299–322.

<sup>160</sup> Book became then some attribute of kings—Hoffmann, *Buchkunst und Königtum*, p. 7ff.

<sup>161</sup> Jerzy Kloczowski, “Kult św. Michała Archanioła w Polsce średniowiecznej”, *Zeszyty Naukowe KUL* 14 (1971), 19–27; Erdmann, *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens*, p. 17f.: in Germany St. Archangel Michael took over part of the nature of the Germanic god Wodan—Callahan, “The Cult of St. Michael”, p. 181–204.

<sup>162</sup> Kürbis, “*Sekwencja Ad celebris*”, p. 48, Kürbis, “*Epistola Mathildis Suevae*”, p. 79.

<sup>163</sup> *Necrolog des Klosters Michelsberg in Bamberg*, MGH Antiquitates 4, Libri memoriales et necrologia; N.S. 6, ed. Johannes Nospickel (Hannover, 2004), p. 78v (11.05): *Misico dux Poloniorum, frater noster. Hic dedit nobis pallium et VI cappas puerorum et plurimum pecunie, unde factę sunt XXIV statuę, que circa chorum sunt lokatę III candeli*—see: Aleksander



of the Polish king to the prayer community under the auspices of St. Michael the Archangel was indeed very rich, truly regal, and included precious fabrics: to serve as the antependium—i.e. the altar frontal,<sup>164</sup> as well as other materials to be used for six copes for members of the choir. Furthermore, the monarch also funded 24 figures, likely in the form of relief tiles, to be placed around the presbytery, and three candle-stands.<sup>165</sup> Altogether, the Piast's contribution was an important and visible element of the church's *decorum*.

We lack specific information—Thietmar was regrettably dead by the time—to conclusively account for the reasons of Mieszko II's investiture for Bamberg. We can only assume, relying on our general knowledge of the ideological context of such and similar gestures, that the king's generosity stemmed from religious sentiments, and only on that basis may we attempt to venture further presumptions as to the political and prestigious aspects of the same. We know that the cult of Archangel Michael played an important role in Europe at the time. In a sense, the saint was treated as an archetypical monarch. The symbolism of his duties as a servant of Jesus Christ and as his celestial viceroy was often juxtaposed with similar tasks and duties of earthly kings.<sup>166</sup> The archangel was worshipped as the defender of faith. He was believed to be watching over his people, warding off evil spirits, as befitted the general of God's victorious armies in the war against the rebellious forces of Lucifer. On a cosmic scale, Archangel Michael was believed to be the commander in chief of the forces of order and justice whose heavenly senior was Jesus Christ himself, and whose earthly representation rested with the king.<sup>167</sup>

The status of the cult reflected the eminence of the revered entity—Archangel Michael was among the most popular saints worshipped by Carolin-

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Gieysztor, "Bamberg i Polska w XI i XII wieku", *SZ* 15 (1971), 71–83; Jerzy Strzelczyk, "Bamberg a Polska w średniowieczu", *RH* 62 (1996), 73–88, p. 76f.

<sup>164</sup> About significance of such thing see: *Die Ottonen. Kunst-Architektur*, pp. 65, 166, 169.

<sup>165</sup> The text in this place is so imprecise that it can also mean paying for the three candles to burn (in theory eternally) in front of the Altar of St Michael Archangel—more on the matter of the 'eternal light'—Renate Kroos, "Quellen zur liturgischen Benutzung des Domes und seiner Ausstattung", in *Der Magdeburger Dom. Ottonische Gründung und staufischer Neubau—Bericht über ein wissenschaftliches Symposium in Magdeburg vom 7.10. bis 11.10. 1986* ed. Ernst Ullmann (Leipzig, 1989), pp. 88–97, p. 91; David Postles, "Lamps, lights and layfolk: 'popular' devotion before the Black Death", *Journal of Medieval History* 25 (1999), 97–114.

<sup>166</sup> Eberhardt, *Via regia: Der Fürstenspiegel*, p. 462ff.; see also: Reitemeier, *Die christliche Legitimation von*.

<sup>167</sup> Wolfram von den Steinen, *Der Kosmos des Mittelalters. Von Karl dem Grossen zu Bernard von Clairvaux* (Bern – München, 1967), p. 23ff.

gian rulers.<sup>168</sup> Also in the newly emerging empire under Liudolfing rule, monarchs continued their adoration of the viceroy to the celestial King of Kings.<sup>169</sup> The Saxon centre of the cult in Hildesheim was one of the most important sanctuaries under Ottonian kings and enjoyed their evident favour.<sup>170</sup> This exceptional devotion to the cult of St. Michael was evidenced by the famous and widely discussed penitential pilgrimage of Otto III to the Monte Gargano monastery, the main centre of the archangel's cult in Italy and Western Europe.<sup>171</sup>

The above evidence supports the assumption that the choice of the discussed hymn to be included as an introduction to the subsequent sections of the codex, perfectly coincided, through its central focus on the motif of St. Michael the Archangel, with the popular tendencies of the day, as well as with the royal aspirations of the Polish court. The latter of which enjoyed great support from duchess Mathilda and her circles.

In the Middle Ages, the solemnity of St. Michael, which fell on 29th September, was celebrated with great gravity. We could therefore assume that the founder of the codex selected this particular sequence in order to somehow relate the act of gifting the volume to Mieszko II with the solemn liturgy accentuating the regal cult of St. Michael.<sup>172</sup> After all, we know how much importance was attributed in those days to the symbolism of placing a given event within the timeframe of the sacral order.

Researchers typically date the compilation of the codex and its subsequent presentation to the Polish ruler at between 1025 (the year of Mieszko II's coronation) and 1027 (the date of the conclusive reconciliation between Conrad II and his internal opponents<sup>173</sup>—i.e. the circles Mathilda descended from).<sup>174</sup> The caesuras, although hypothetical, seem fairly probable, the former being

<sup>168</sup> Callahan, "The Cult of St. Michael", p. 181ff.; Erik Peterson, *Das Buch von den Engeln. Stellung und Bedeutung der heiligen Engeln im Kultus* (Leipzig, 1955), p. 58ff.

<sup>169</sup> Callahan, "The Cult of St. Michael", p. 182ff.

<sup>170</sup> Hans Goetting, *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe von 815–1221*, Germania sacra, NF 20 (Berlin, 1984), pp. 166–230.

<sup>171</sup> Swinarski, *Herrscher mit den Heiligen*, p. 64ff.

<sup>172</sup> Archangel was to be a final judge, and therefore fit into the contemporary millennial devotion very well—Peter Dinzelbacher, "Pörsenliches Gericht und Weltgericht", in *Endzeitvorstellungen*, ed. Barbara Haupt (Düsseldorf, 2001), pp. 95–132; Richard Landes, "The Fear of an Apocalyptic Year 1000: Augustian Historiography, Medieval and Modern", in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, pp. 243–268.

<sup>173</sup> Codex is often combined with the alliance opponents of the king Conrad II with the Polish ruler—Labuda, *Mieszko II. Król polski*, p. 66.

<sup>174</sup> Mathild, born 988, was a daughter of Herman II, Duke of Swabia; her first man was Conrad, Duke of Carinthia, married 1002, died 1011, the second was Frederick, Duke of Upper Lotharingia, from 1019 until his death in 1026—Kürbis, "Epistola Mathildis Suevae",

suggested by the text of the dedicational letter itself when it makes a clear reference to the beginning of Mieszko II's reign. As for the latter, it would have been unlikely that after the pacification of Conrad II's political opponents by the victorious emperor, the defeated nobles would elect to further undermine their relations with the monarch in such a manner. We cannot forget that Conrad II was candidly opposed to the royal aspirations of the Piast house and was at that time mobilising his forces for an open war against Mieszko.<sup>175</sup> After all, it is evident that the foundation of such a codex was not merely an act of piety, but—especially in this particular case—very much a political undertaking.

The ideal day for the act of presenting the volume to the Polish king would have naturally been on Sunday. In 1025, the feast day devoted to St. Michael fell on Wednesday, the year after on Thursday, and in 1027 on Friday. However, there was also another very favourable date that would have closely corresponded to the character of the gift—Sunday, the 8th of May 1026, when two separate feast days coincided. One was the fourth Sunday after Easter—called *cantate*,<sup>176</sup> traditionally celebrated with a particularly solemn, choral mass, which would have reflected the musical character of the passage discussed above. More importantly, however, it was also the day when *apparitionis St. Michaeli Archangeli* was celebrated to commemorate the archangel's manifestation on the mountain of Gargano.<sup>177</sup> In Poland, the custom of holding a solemn liturgy on May 8th in honour of Archangel Michael disappeared in 13th c. when the new solemnity of St. Stanislaus was introduced and fell on that very date. In other traditions, however, the day retained its relation to the persona of the celestial viceroy.<sup>178</sup> In the context of our discussion, it is also noteworthy that in 999, Otto III himself made a pilgrimage to Monte Gargano, the sanctuary of Archangel Michael, a fact that must have been common knowledge among his contemporaries, especially those harbouring sentimental memory of the late emperor.<sup>179</sup>

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p. 74ff.; Glocker, *Die Verwandten der Ottonen*, p. 23f.; Brühl, *Deutschland-Frankreich*, p. 484ff.; *Europäische Stammtafeln*, tabl. 9; 12.

<sup>175</sup> Herwig Wolfram, *Konrad II. 990–1039. Kaiser dreier Reiche* (München, 2000), p. 226ff.; Franz-Reiner Erkens, *Konrad II. (um 990–1039). Herrschaft und Reich des ersten Salierkaisers* (Regensburg, 1998), p. 150ff.; Werner Trillmich, *Kaiser Konrad II. und seine Zeit* (Bonn, 1991), p. 161ff.

<sup>176</sup> Sierck, *Festtag und Politik*, p. 302f.

<sup>177</sup> Swinarski, *Herrscher mit den Heiligen*, p. 64ff.

<sup>178</sup> Kłoczowski, "Kult św. Michała Archanioła", p. 25; Andrew A. Bialas, *The Patronage of Saint Michael the Archangel* (Chicago, 1954), p. 13ff.

<sup>179</sup> *Petri Damiani Vita*, p. 53 (c. 25).

Although the above deliberations remain in the sphere of speculation, the character of the ideological message conveyed by the codex, combined with our general awareness of the significance attributed to feast days, make the Sunday of May 8th 1026 the most likely date for the official presentation of the gift from duchess Mathilda to king Mieszko II, as well as for the occasional mass that would have accompanied such an event.

Our considerations so far seem to verify the claim that both the actual text as well as more general circumstances surrounding the composition of the codex had been carefully thought through. The above conclusion will play a significant part in our analysis pertaining to the subsequent sections of the book as well.

### 3.2.2 *St. Sebastian—an Ascetic and a Soldier of Christ*

The next section of the discussed codex, following the initial sequence presented above, is the dedicational letter from duchess Mathilda (folios 2 v, 3r). Due to its rather unusual content, verging on downright glorification of the Piast house, it has been the part of the volume most comprehensively analysed by researchers. However, as certain passages of the text remain rather vague—and thus ambiguous, one could attempt to add several observations to the already available body of excellent commentaries, which—particularly in the context of our discussion—could enhance our understanding of the significance of this invaluable source text.

On the surface, the interpretation of the letter seems fairly straight-forward. In the dedication, Mathilda praises virtue (*virtus*),<sup>180</sup> a quality greatly revered by Mieszko, which was after all a key attribute of a truly Christian monarch. In a subsequent section, the duchess continues in similar spirit by referring to the Polish ruler as the “king invincible”. The designation constituted a formalised title and should not be perceived as a reference to the current political situation or actual military victories of the Polish ruler. Its role was to emphasize the king’s relation to Christ through whom all victory is granted.<sup>181</sup> Notably, said victory, apart from its tangible, earthly dimension,

<sup>180</sup> Personal qualities of the ruler would then gain importance in visual propaganda of power—Piotr Skubiszewski, “W służbie cesarza, w służbie króla. Temat władzy w sztuce ottońskiej”, in *Funkcja dzieła sztuki*, ed. Elżbieta Studniarkowa (Warszawa 1972), pp. 17–72, p. 61ff.; Fried, “Tugend und Heiligkeit”, p. 41ff.

<sup>181</sup> This phrase has ancient roots: Michael McCormick, *Eternal victory. Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Bizantium and the Early Medieval West* (Cambridge, 1990); see also: Brigitte Merta, “Die Titel Heinrichs II. und der Salier”, in *Intitulatio III: Lateinische Herrschertitel und Herrschertitulaturen vom 7. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert*, eds. Herwig Wolfram, Anton Scharer, Bernd Schneidmüller, *MIÖG ErgBd. 29* (Wien-Köln-Graz 1988), pp. 163–200.

would also belong to a broader, eschatological context.<sup>182</sup> The phrase, as used in the beginning of the letter, would later reappear towards its end, where Mathilda wished Mieszko II “the greatest of joys in Christ and a providential triumph over his enemy”.<sup>183</sup>

Understood literarily, the words would seem to have placed all opponents of the Polish ruler (the German king among them!) on the side of the enemies of Jesus Christ himself. However, their implications and potential political relevance are weakened by the fact that this and similar phraseologies were fairly commonly used in epistemological writings of the day.<sup>184</sup>

The scope of designations employed in texts praising medieval rulers was, at least to a certain extent, standardised. From the many available formulas, however, one could choose those that would, often quite subtly, reflect the desires of the author. It can be assumed that indeed such was the case in the analysed passage. Therefore, should we accept the arguments of researchers claiming that the discussed letter originated from the desire to establish or maintain an alliance between the Lotharingian (or, more generally, west German) opposition camp and Mieszko II, against the newly enthroned king Conrad II, the titulature and designations employed in the text in reference to the Piast would also likely have served to express the diminishment of the common enemy’s moral position. Notably, at the time of writing the letter, its editor(s?) most certainly believed king Conrad II to be Mieszko II’s enemy. Numerous independent sources sufficiently evidence the far-reaching repercussions of the first Piast coronations and the anger with which they were met by the elites from the circles of the then ruler of Germany.<sup>185</sup>

In the subsequent sections of the letter, Mathilda acknowledges the divine legitimisation of Boleslav Chrobry’s son’s authority in the following words: “the grace of God has granted You [i.e. Mieszko II] both the call and dignity of kingship as well as the potent boon of royal ability”.<sup>186</sup> It seems that the duchess of Lotharingia’s praise and elevation of Mieszko’s regal virtue was offered in response to some attempts of its devaluation, as if fending off attacks from some, unknown to us, opponents of the Piast. Notably, the text of the dedication, rather than mention just “static” predispositions of

<sup>182</sup> Royal crown itself was understood theologically as a sign of holiness, the type of nimbus—Ott, *Krone und Krönung*, p. 153ff.

<sup>183</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, p. 140: *supremum in Christo gaudium ac felicem super hoste triumphum*.

<sup>184</sup> Merta, “Die Titel Heinrichs II.,” p. 167: about Henry II: *Heinricus divina favente clementia Romanorum invictissimus rex*; p. 168f., similarly about Conrad II.: p. 174.

<sup>185</sup> *RGSEO*, vol. 4, p. 127ff. (no. 575 i 576).

<sup>186</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, p. 140: *tibi diuina gratia regium nomen pariter et honorem concessit, arteque regnandi ad id necessaria honestissime ditauit*.

Mieszko II to occupy the throne, also elaborates on his practical abilities as a ruler—various sources evidence the great significance attributed in those days not only to the typically regal leadership talents, but also the skills of actual management of a community.<sup>187</sup>

We do not know how to exactly understand the passage claiming that the Polish ruler

to God himself [devoted] the inception of [his] kingdom with a pious heart.<sup>188</sup>

The words may refer in some way to the behaviour, as mentioned in several sources, of Frankish rulers who would, particularly at the beginning of their reign, go to great lengths to display ostentatious piety and manifest exceptional care for the moral standards of their subject community.<sup>189</sup> However, the passage in question is far too laconic to allow any conclusive deliberations on the matter.

The subsequent parts of the dedicational letter are equally difficult to verify. They speak of numerous churches erected by the Polish ruler as well as his ability to praise God (in prayer, possibly also liturgy)<sup>190</sup> in not just his own tongue, but also Latin and Greek. There have been voices claiming, if unverifiably, that Mathilda's words were more than mere commendations, rhetorical devices often found in the then texts of similar nature, but that they reflected Mieszko II's actual efforts and foundations.<sup>191</sup> Similar interpretations have been proposed as far as the ruler's knowledge of Latin and Greek, which would put him that much nearer the medieval ideal of a ruler not only pious but also educated, even learned, one able to wield real, theological and spiritual power over the Church in his country. However, the

<sup>187</sup> Einhardt, *Vita Caroli Magni*, 166ff.; Bogdan Lapis, 'Rex utilis'. *Kryteria oceny władców germańskich we wczesnym średniowieczu, od połowy V do początku VIII wieku* (Poznań, 1986), p. 9ff. *passim*.

<sup>188</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, p. 140: *felici incestu, ut audiui, ipsi diuinitati regni tui primitias deuoto pectore consecrasti*.

<sup>189</sup> *Theganus, Gesta Hludowici*, p. 192ff. (c. 13).

<sup>190</sup> Brygida Kürbis, "Slawisch, lateinisch und Griechisch. An der Schwelle der lateinischen Schriftkultur in Polen", in *Lateinische Kultur im X. Jahrhundert. Akten des I. Internationalen Mittellateinkongresses, Heidelberg 12–15 IX 1988*, ed. Walter Berschin (Stuttgart, 1991), pp. 235–248; or (the same text) in *Na progach historii*, vol. 1, pp. 417–432.

<sup>191</sup> Teresa Rodzińska-Choraży, "Co nam mówi architektura murowana", in *Ziemia polskie w X wieku*, pp. 361–387; architectural investments, particularly the construction of monasteries located within a certain fashion, the broader movement, initiated by millennial piety—Richard Plant, "Architectural Developments in the Empire North of the Alps: The Patronage of the Imperial Court", in *The White Mantle of Churches: Architecture, Liturgy, and Art around the Millennium*, International Medieval Research 10: Art History, ed. Nigel Hiscock (Turnhout, 2003), pp. 29–56.

mention of Mieszko praising God in his own tongue falls completely outside possible interpretations, as without any apparent context it could mean almost anything: starting from his knowledge of some simple Slavic prayers, and ending with a suggestion that he was familiar with Orthodox, or simply Slavic, liturgy.

The text of the dedication indicates that these favourable opinions, as well as others she did not mention, had been related to Mathilda, and that all of them confirmed the fact that Mieszko was

especially blessed and that he was not only by men's but also God's ruling elevated to the position of power over the Lord's people...<sup>192</sup>

That particular passage of the duchess's letter is of great significance. Through reference to absolute arguments of divine legitimisation, it dismisses any claims that would seek to deprecate Mieszko's rights to the crown.

The subsequent parts of the dedication, while continuing to enumerate the virtues of the Polish king, remain in the sphere of the *profanum*, although the highly praising, even laudatory tone of the letter does not change. We are therefore presented with a list of truly Christian qualities of Mieszko II who apparently was righteous in his conduct, a just adjudicator, and a man who extends his protection over widows, orphans and the poor. The above bears close resemblance to the long tradition of paragons of royal virtues, dating back to late antiquity.<sup>193</sup>

The stylisation of Mieszko II's character inspires the letter's author to perceive the ruler as a genuine "athlete of Christ"—a designation often employed in hagiographic descriptions of saints and ascetics.<sup>194</sup> Although the exact phrase as such does not appear in the text, we do come across

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<sup>192</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, p. 140: *teque non adeo Humano Guam diuino iudicio electum ad regendum populum sanctum.*

<sup>193</sup> Smaragdus of Saint-Mihiel sublimated the image of the king as the protector of orphans and widows, the king of mercy and peace, the spiritual leader and the priest, full of virtues and invincible. It is close in meaning to the letter by Mathilda. The monastery of St Mihiel, where Smaragdus led his activities, remained under the patronage of the dukes of Upper Lotharingia—*Codex Mathildis*, p. 74; Similar features which occur in model portraits of the rulers of the West can also be found in the East (influenced by Byzantium?)—see Eberhardt, 'Via Regia'. *Der Fürstenspiegel*, p. 462ff., John M. Wallace-Hadrill, "The *Via regia* of the Carolingian Age", in *Trends in Medieval Political Thought* eds. Beryll Smalley, Peter R. L. Brown (Oxford, 1965), pp. 22–41, p. 22ff.; see also: e.g.: so called 'Poučenie of Vladimir Monomach'—*Povest' vriemiennykh let*, p. 153ff. (*The Russian Primary Chronicle*); and: *The Life of Alexander Nevsky (Žitie Alexandra Nevskogo)* in: *Pamiatnik russkoj literatury XIII veka*, ed. Jurij K. Begunov (Moskva, 1965), pp. 159ff.

<sup>194</sup> Körntgen, *Königsherrschaft und Gottes*, p. 54ff.

its adequate counterpart. Namely, the Piast is compared to the “soldier of Christ”—St. Sebastian.

We can also trace other, highly important meanings conveyed in the quoted passage. Therefore, we ought to take an even closer look at its specific wording, especially since in that particular part of the text the language used is particularly ambiguous and obscure, which has caused considerable difficulties for translators.

When addressing Mieszko II, Mathilda writes:

Christi procul dubio militem cum beato Sebastiano sub regalis uestitus cultu ducis absconditum...<sup>195</sup>

In Brygida Kürbis’s translation the same reads as follows:

...it is undoubtedly a soldier of Christ with saint Sebastian that you carry under the lavishness of you kingly vestment.<sup>196</sup>

In an earlier translation by Kazimierz Abgarowicz, the same words read somewhat differently:

...together with saint Sebastian, under richly adorned kingly vestment, certainly carrying a soldier of Christ.<sup>197</sup>

Unfortunately, none of the translations is completely adequate. They fail to emphasize, indeed they seem to completely leave out, the accent that the letter’s author placed on the nature of the Polish king’s similarity to the Roman saint.<sup>198</sup> Furthermore, both translations fail to reflect the meaning of the Latin word “dux”—commander (duke?). However, this somewhat confusing, intricately formulated sentence clearly states that Mieszko, just like saint Sebastian himself, “carries a soldier of Christ”. The two personas are alike in that their piety is concealed by their *cultus ducis*—i.e. the manner of a warrior, a commander. What distinguishes the Polish ruler is the fact that he also possesses *vestitus regalis*—the vestment, or robes of a king. Therefore, the quoted sentence would be more accurately translated as:

it is undoubtedly a soldier of Christ that you carry, as saint Sebastian did, under the lavishness of you kingly vestment, in your capacity as a commander.

<sup>195</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, p. 139.

<sup>196</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, p. 140.

<sup>197</sup> *Wybór źródeł do historii Polski średniowiecznej (do połowy XV wieku)*, vol. 1, eds. Gerard Labuda, Benon Miśkiewicz (Poznań, 1966), p. 82f.; see also: Pietrusiński, “Epistola Mathildis Suevae”, p. 53.

<sup>198</sup> Francesco Scorza Barcellona, “Der hl. Sebastian”, *LMA* vol. 7, p. 1658f.



To fully understand the analysed passage—including its still unmentioned continuation—we must first consider the Roman legend of St. Sebastian, several words of which were in fact almost directly copied in the sentence quoted above.<sup>199</sup>

The story of St. Sebastian's life, which was fairly popular in those days, depicts an ardent Christian leading a sort of a double life in the eternal city; hiding his faith, he prayed and contemplated in secret, while continuing to perform his official duties as the commander of the first cohort under emperors Diocletian and Maximilian.<sup>200</sup> Notably, Sebastian had been carrying out his tasks of a secular commander faithfully with great devotion, until the Roman emperor decided to act against Christians. The conflict between the saint and the emperor, despite the former's martyrdom, ended, as could be expected, in a moral triumph over the depraved monarch.<sup>201</sup>

The structure of the message conveyed to Mieszko II, considering the significance of the quoted hagiographic legend, must have carried with it a number of intertwining and mutually reinforcing meanings. The basis in this case would be in finding a parallel between the life, social standing, and personality of the Roman saint and the Piast ruler. We should therefore observe that according to the legend, Sebastian was an excellent and devoted knight-commander of Roman troops. Similar military leadership qualities can be read into the depiction of Mieszko II in Mathilda's letter. The Roman, an ardent Christian, practiced his religion in secret—also Mieszko, although forced by his "life" circumstances to play the part of a lay nobleman, was in fact, "in his heart", an ascetic of God (*miles/ athleta Christi*)<sup>202</sup> and would secretly, as suggested in the text, devote himself to prayer and penance. Furthermore, St. Sebastian was forced to deal with an unjust, evil Roman emperor—Mieszko II

<sup>199</sup> It is a phrase: ... *sub chlamyde terreni imperii Chrystii militem agebat absconditum*—*Acta S. Sebastiani martyrtis*, Sancti Ambrosii Mediolanensis Episcopi Opera Omnia, ed. Jacques-Paule Migne, *Patrologia Latina cursus completus* 17 (Parisiis 1845), pp. 1019–1058, p. 1020 (c. 1,2) (*dressed in the earthly attire, acted a hidden knight of the state of Christ*); similar: *ibid.*, p. 1056, (c. 23,85): *sub chlamyde latere, cum miles esset dignissimus Christi*.

<sup>200</sup> *Acta S. Sebastiani martyrtis*, p. 1021 9(c. 1,1); see also: *Jakobi a Voragine, Legenda aurea. Vulgo historia lombardica dicta*, ed. Johann G. T. Graesse (Osnabrück, 1965), p. 109ff.; and: Georg Weber, *Sebastian. Der heilige Soldat Roms* (Recklinghausen, 1947).

<sup>201</sup> *Acta S. Sebastiani martyrtis*, p. 1056f. (c. 23,87–90).

<sup>202</sup> *Acta S. Sebastiani martyrtis*, p. 1022ff.; about the 'secret' piety see also: *Cosmasae Pragensis Chronica*, p. 174 (3,13); the words *Athleta Christi* were written on Boleslaw's Chrobry tombstone, see: *Średniowieczna inskrypcja i tumba Bolesława Chrobrego wkatedrze poznańskiej*, ed. Piotr Kraszewski (Poznań 2002), p. 14; also: Antoni Gąsiorowski, "Tradycja poznańskich grobów monarszych", in *Kultura średniowieczna i staropolska. Studia ofiarowane Aleksandrowi Gięsztorowi w pięćdziesięciolecie pracy naukowej*, eds. Danuta Gawinowa, Sławomir Gawlas, Maria Koczerska (Warszawa, 1991), pp. 231–239; Wiszewski, *Domus Bolesłai*, p. 55ff.

in turn was in conflict with Conrad II. Admittedly, the Piast's adversary was not yet an emperor at the time, merely the king of Germany, but the same does not rule out finding a parallel as in those days, the post of the German monarch was almost automatically associated with power over Rome and the title of the emperor which were, incidentally, believed to be a direct continuation of the authority and office of ancient imperators.<sup>203</sup>

The scope of parallels suggested in Mathilda's letter is very important and deserves a more detailed analysis. Let us begin with a look at the last of the mentioned connections, namely the juxtaposition of the relations between St. Sebastian and Diocletian with those between Mieszko II and Conrad II. It is rather unlikely that said implication would appear in the letter without clear intent. The underlying meaning of the quoted passage seems fairly unambiguous and can be boiled down to a strong, if oblique criticism of the German ruler's attitude towards the Polish king. In fact, however, drawing a line between Conrad II and one of the fiercest persecutors of Christianity ever to take the Roman throne, even if only indirectly through a string of associations, would serve to disparage the moral stance of the founder of the Salian dynasty.

The political overtone of the quoted passage is further strengthened by yet another nuance. It is interesting to observe that the true "soldier of Christ"—i.e. St. Sebastian, as well as his follower, Mieszko II—were, in the words of the letter's editor, commanders of the emperor's armies. At this point, one can but refer the thought expressed in Mathilda's letter to the ideas of Brun of Querfurt. His texts, particularly the *Letter to King Henry*, suggest that in the author's opinion the postulated function of the Piast ruler would involve carrying out military tasks in the service of *Imperium Christianum* whose rule rested with the German monarch.<sup>204</sup> Let us for now settle on simply noting the fact in question, we will return to the interpretation of its significance in a later part of this discussion. Meanwhile, we should focus our attention on certain strictly ideological, yet important as the basis of royal authority, matters related to the manner in which the connection with St. Sebastian is implied in the text of the codex's dedication.

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<sup>203</sup> Thomas Heinz, "Julius Caesar und die Deutschen. Zu Ursprung und Gehalt eines deutschen Geschichtsbewußtseins in der Zeit Gregors VII. Und Heinrichs IV", in *Die Salier und das Reich*, ed. Stefan Weinfurter, vol. 3: *Gesellschaftlicher und Ideengeschicht-licher Wandel im Reich der Salier* (Sigmaringen, 1991), pp. 245–277.

<sup>204</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*, p. 118ff.; Warner, "Saints, Pagans, War", p. 23ff.; Lotter, "Christliche Völkergemeinschaft und", p. 173f.

The issue of secretly indulging in ardent religious practices by the two mentioned personas may seem insignificant, but a closer analysis we find evidence to the contrary. The implication places Mieszko II in the scope of religious practices, very popular among the strict European elites of the day, involving a form of secretive—or rather theatrical, as it was in fact common knowledge—night-time penance, ardent personal prayer, and other forms of displaying one's piety.

Hagiographies dating back to the 10th and 11th centuries provide many examples of various devotional behaviours, bearing strong similarity to those attributed to Mieszko II.<sup>205</sup> Such ideals of secular sainthood were most likely originally derived from *The Life of St. Gerald*<sup>206</sup> written by the second abbot of Cluny, Odo (927–942). The protagonist of said text was a French aristocrat, count of Aurillac, who died in 909. He was allegedly a paragon of Christian virtue characterised by such traits as humility, modesty, love for peace, care over the weak and poor etc., all of which reappeared in later hagiography. Notably, many of these traits were also, as we remember, attributed to Mieszko II.

Deep in his heart, however, Gerald was a monk who wished for little more than to lead a contemplative life.<sup>207</sup> He would have likely joined a monastery if not for the local bishop who had explained to him how much the local people, his subjects, needed him to remain their secular lord, an exemplary ruler and trustworthy warrior.<sup>208</sup>

Of other saints better known in the region of central Europe, lay people whose lives would in some way correspond to the Cluny model, we could mention Wenceslaus of Bohemia who

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<sup>205</sup> Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil*, p. 91ff., 102f; (Saint Wenceslaus), p. 168ff. (Saint Adalbert), p. 161 (Saint Henry II).

<sup>206</sup> *Sancti Odonis abbatis Cluniacensis Vita sancti Geraldii Auriliacensis comitis*, *Patrologia Latina* 133 (Paris, 1853), pp. 639–704; more about the person; Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil*, p. 32ff.; Joseph-Claude Poulin, "Geraldus von Aurillac", *LMA* 6, p. 1357f; Heintelmann, "Sanctitas und 'Tugendadel'", p. 741ff.

<sup>207</sup> In return, besides the night prayers and fasts, Gerald provided for the monasteries and went on pilgrimages to holy places—Fechter, *Cluny, Adel und Volk*, p. 54ff.; Paul Rousset, "L'ideal chevaleresque dans deux *Vitae clunisiennes*", in *Mélanges offerts à Edmond-René Labande, Études de civilisation médiévale IX<sup>e</sup>–XII<sup>e</sup> siècles* (Poitiers, 1974), pp. 623–633.

<sup>208</sup> Friedrich Lotter, "Das Idealbild adliger Laienfrömmigkeit in den Anfängen Clunys: *Odos Vita des Grafen Gerald von Aurillac*", in *Benedictine Culture 750–1050*, ed. Willem Lourdaux (Leuven, 1983), pp. 76–95.

secretly summoned a priest to learn at night everything he could from him and would carry his booklet [prayer book?] concealed in his garments, and whenever he found a peaceful place he would read it ardently.<sup>209</sup>

A similar desire for asceticism could be observed in some actions of St. Adalbert who had, as befitted his rank of a Church dignitary,

a bed laid with thick eiderdown, covered with sleek purple, [which] attracted the eye,

but preferred not to indulge in this luxury, as

for him, a bed meant bare ground or a mangy felt and a rock to rest his head on.<sup>210</sup>

German rulers were also suspected by their contemporaries to have practiced such ways of expressing their religiousness. At night, often in secret from his own court, Otto III was said to have prayed and done penance.<sup>211</sup> Henry II did not refrain from such practices either.<sup>212</sup> Thus, the style of religious piety attributed to Mieszko II was not only elitist, but even royal in character. All the above references to religiousness placed the Piast ruler within the popular pattern of a monarch characterised by priestly piety (*rex-sacerdos*), whose eagerness in religious practice neared that of an ascetic monk.<sup>213</sup>

What seems particularly important in this context is the fact that the author, or authors of the dedicational letter, by depicting the Piast within the frame of the subtly stylized ideal of a perfect monarch, included the Polish ruler in the system of their own elite culture, perceived him, in a sense, as one of their own and thus, as is very important, acknowledged his high status.

It is noteworthy that the inclusion of references to the life of St. Sebastian in Mathilda's letter can be associated with the then understanding of the character and significance of this particular saint in the order of sacral hierarchy. In fact, St. Sebastian still remains a very eminent character—after all, he

<sup>209</sup> *Legenda Christiani*, p. 54ff.; see also: J. Staber, "Die älteste Lebensbeschreibung des Fürsten", p. 190f.

<sup>210</sup> *S. Adalberti pragensis episcopi et martyris vita prior*, p. 14.

<sup>211</sup> Waldhoff, "Der Kaiser in der Krise", p. 23ff.; see also: Lothar Bornscheuer, 'Miseriae regum'. *Untersuchungen zum Kriesen- und Todesgedanken in den herrschaftstheologischen Vorstellungen der ottonisch-salischen Zeit* (Berlin, 1968), p. 16ff.; 60ff.

<sup>212</sup> Wollasch, "Geschichtliche Hintergründe der", pp. 55–69; Bornscheuer, 'Miseriae regum', p. 122ff.

<sup>213</sup> Ludger Körntgen, "König und Priester. Das sakrale Königtum der Ottonen zwischen Herrschaftstheologie, Herrschaftspraxis und Heilssorge", in *Die Ottonen. Kunst—Architektur*, pp. 51–61.

is the third patron of Rome alongside St. Peter and St. Paul. His cult, always popular in Christian lands, was solidified in the Carolingian territories after his relics had been transferred from Rome to Soissons in 826. From this city, once one of Frankish capitals, the devotional interest in St. Sebastian—along with the remains of his body—came to Germany in 10th c. Altars devoted to him were already found in Reichenau, Schänis, and especially St. Gallen, where his cult soon gained great popularity. Interestingly, the sanctuary of that particular monastery is where some researchers believe Mathilda's codex was written.<sup>214</sup> Naturally, said fact, if true, would not necessarily account for the reference to St. Sebastian in the dedicational letter. After all, even without it, we can trace a fairly straightforward functional correlation between Archangel Michael, the celestial warrior, general of Christ's "guard" referred to in the codex's invocation (so called sequence), and St. Sebastian mentioned in the dedication—the faithful commander of the imperial first cohort.

The reference to St. Sebastian would have therefore constituted, apart from a manifestation of the Polish ruler's alleged piety, also an allusive reminder of his military prowess which is, incidentally, depicted in the very next sentence of the letter as a form of a religious mission. More specifically, after the abovementioned line comparing the Piast to St. Sebastian, the letter continues with a wish directed at the Polish ruler:

May you only to God return souls tempted by the devil's trickery, [you] who desire to repay for the talents you were granted a hundredfold...<sup>215</sup>

The sentence, revoking the book of Gospel (Matthew 25, 14–30), was copied directly from the "Passion of St. Sebastian", but as borrowing was certainly deliberate, the meaning of the words should be interpreted in the context of the surrounding sections of the text. All evidence seems to suggest that the insertion of biblical quotes constituted a sort of linking device used by the author—quite skilfully—to traverse between general contexts and more particular comments relating directly to the specifics of the Piast ruler's situation. As it stands, the subsequent words addressed to Mieszko II read as follows:

Indeed, guided by your father's example, you proceed almost exclusively in heavenly matters. Who [i.e. Boleslav Chrobry] in the part of the world now under your rule was as a spring and root of the sacred, Catholic, apostolic faith.

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<sup>214</sup> Kürbis, "Epistola Mathildis Suevae", p. 63f.

<sup>215</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, p. 140.

For [those] whom holy preachers failed to convert with words, he pursued with iron, bringing the wildest and most barbaric peoples to the Lord's Supper.<sup>216</sup>

The quoted passage is fairly unambiguous in terms of the manner in which Mieszko II was to return to God souls tempted by the devil's trickery and how he was to use the talents granted to him. The fact that the father's example which was supposed to guide him<sup>217</sup> is at all mentioned, proves, contrary to the opinion of the publisher of Mathilda's codex's, that the dedication does not express a sharp contrast between the allegedly violent father—warrior, and the gentle, peacefully inclined son—acting more like a monk or a priest. There is also no doubt that in the light of the analysed text, much like Boleslav Chrobry before him, Mieszko II was expected to convert pagan peoples with “iron”, which in the eyes of the manuscript's author was a highly commendable path to follow.<sup>218</sup>

The final section of Mathilda's letter carries on to explain the reasons for sending the codex to the king, and—rather typically—expresses wishes of a long life, good health and victory over all enemies. Among the claims justifying the gift, we find one more mention of Mieszko II's kingship which was to benefit from the codex in allowing him to fully understand the particulars of various religious services as well as their connections to various celebrations. In these words, combined with the earlier reference to the Polish ruler's learnedness, we can clearly trace efforts to depict the character of the Piast monarch in a way that would fit it into the popular model of an educated and religious ruler. He was therefore expected to become not merely an administrative protector of the Church within his domain, but also one of its superiors charged with ensuring the proper performance of services in the House of God.<sup>219</sup> In that sense, the book itself would be counted among the important insignia of a monarch treated as a priest-king (or even monk-king).<sup>220</sup> It is not without significance that in majestic representations of the

<sup>216</sup> *Codex Mathildis*, p. 140: *Paternis nempe exemplis ammonitus, totus pene uersaris in caelestibus, qui in illa mundi parte quam regis quasi quidam fons et origo sanctae catholice et apostolice extitit fidei. Nam quos sancti praedicatores corrigere non poterant uerbo ille insecutus est ferro, compellens ad caenam dominicam barbaras ac ferocissimas nationes.*

<sup>217</sup> Reminder of noble father was a way to add splendor, see e.g.: Hagen Keller, “Das Bildnis Kaiser Heinrichs im Regensburger Evangeliar aus Montecassino (Bilb. Vat., Ottob. lat.74). Zugleich ein Beitrag zu Wipos ‘Teatologus’”, *FMS* 30 (1996), 173–214, p. 180.

<sup>218</sup> Discussion of the problem of the mission under pressure in: Kahl, “*Compellere intrare. Die*”, pp. 176–274.

<sup>219</sup> Hoffmann, *Mönchkönig und ‘rex idiota’*, p. 50ff.

<sup>220</sup> Martin Kintzinger, *Wissen wird Macht. Bildung im Mittelalter* (Stuttgart, 2003); Rosamund Mc Kitterick, “Charles the Bald (823–877) and his library: the patronage of learning”, *The English Historical Review* 95 (1980), 28–47.

universal king—Jesus Christ, a book typically also played a vital role as a symbol, or even medium through which the power over the world and the course of its history would be exercised.<sup>221</sup>

### 3.2.3 *Dedicational Miniature*

The illustration depicting the duchess of Loraine and the king of Poland (fol. 3<sup>v</sup>) is the most impressive surviving visualisation of an early Piast ruler's royal majesty. However, the fact that the original disappeared in mid 19th century somewhat undermines the value of the image presenting Mathilda handing the volume to Mieszko II as an object of in-depth research analyses.<sup>222</sup>

Two independent, coloured copies of the lost miniature were made several years prior to its removal from the loose stack of sheets that the famed Mathilda's codex had become. At the time, the book was being stored at the library of the St Jadwiga's Catholic church in Berlin.<sup>223</sup> One of the copies was made in 1836 for count Edward Raczyński by his brother Atanazy. The second, came from the hand of a German researcher, Philip Anton Dethier who, while working on a doctoral thesis pertaining to the codex, made a very detailed copy of the composition, much better than the one by Atanazy Raczyński.<sup>224</sup> The recently conducted comparative analysis of the surviving parts of the codex against Dethier's drawings documenting handwriting samples, confirmed the precision and accuracy of the author's work and allow the treatment of his copperplate as the basis for all studies related to the missing miniature.

Several descriptions of the composition were also compiled in mid 19th c., including comments on the colours used, the positioning of the presented figures, etc. None of the above would be sufficient to perform any legitimate iconographic analyses, as art historians would wish it; but a medievalist interested in the ideology of power can, or even should attempt to account for the lost composition in his work. Even more so, considering the fact

<sup>221</sup> Hoffmann, *Buchkunst und Königtum*, p. 7ff.; subsequent opening of the sealed book of the Gospel meant the implementation stages of the vision of the end of the world—e.g.: Ernst Harnischfeger, *Die Bamberger Apokalypse* (Stuttgart, 1981).

<sup>222</sup> As a matter of fact, German analyses of the iconography of power do not notice its existence, it is not even used for comparisons—neither in classic works: Josef Prochno, *Das Schreiber- und Dedikationsbild in der deutschen Buchmalerei*, vol. 1: *Bis zum Ende des 11. Jahrhunderts: 800–1100* (Leipzig – Berlin, 1929), nor in more recent ones: Beuckers, “Das ottonische Stifterbild”, pp. 63–102.

<sup>223</sup> Pietrusiński, “Epistola Mathildis Suevae”, p. 54.

<sup>224</sup> Paweł Strużyk, “Miniatura”, in *Codex Mathildis*, p. 85.

that the number of surviving relics from the early Piast period is generally very scarce.

The below deliberations will not attempt to clarify all of the rather difficult to interpret—not only due to the lacking original—aspects of the ideological overtone and semantic complexities of the missing composition.<sup>225</sup> Such an attempt would provide sufficient material for an entirely independent monograph. Instead, we will focus only on the aspects crucial from the perspective of our immediate concerns in this discussion. We will therefore refrain from analysing the ways in which the miniature adds to the portrayal of Mieszko II's royal majesty, and consider the possible justification for having it included as part of the codex in the first place. It could also prove interesting to determine the broader cultural and political context of the miniature as a whole, as well as of its particular elements.

Let us therefore have a closer look at the surviving copy of the miniature. It depicts two figures: an upright woman and a king sitting on his throne. The caption overhead states that the figures are those of the donator of the gift, Mathilda the daughter of Herman, duke of Swabia, and the recipient, a king named Mieszko—the context allows us to identify him as Mieszko II.<sup>226</sup> There are no traces of any background or framing decorations.<sup>227</sup>

The duchess was placed on the heraldically understood right, i.e. the place reserved in the iconography of the day for persons performing the actual act that the scene was intended to depict. Mathilda hands a closed book to the monarch, held through the cloth of her vestments, while he reaches out for it with his bare right hand.<sup>228</sup>

Direct analogies to the entire composition, including this sort of contact between the donator and recipient of a gift, are difficult to find in Ottonian as well as earlier, Carolingian art.<sup>229</sup> The apparent uniqueness of the discussed piece could signify that the particular depicted elements were intentionally selected to reflect the special purpose of the scene: an emphasis on the majesty of the ruler whose domain lay outside Carolingian tradition. However, such a claim could easily prove erroneous. The surviving works of art

<sup>225</sup> Pietrusiński, "Epistola Mathildis Suevae", p. 59f.; Strużyk, "Miniatura", p. 84ff.

<sup>226</sup> *Hunc librum regi Mahthilt donat Misegoni quam genuit clarus Suerorum dux Herimannus—Codex Mathildis*, p. 140.

<sup>227</sup> Pietrusiński, "Epistola Mathildis Suevae", p. 63ff.

<sup>228</sup> The colours registered by those who saw the miniature in the mid 19th century do not necessarily reflect the originals. Even good quality pigments slightly change their colour, which is also the subject of the observer's own interpretation.

<sup>229</sup> There are some counterparts of various details, but of the whole picture not—Pietrusiński, "Epistola Mathildis Suevae", p. 64.



from the discussed period have survived only on a completely random basis. Moreover, they are now greatly scattered in geographical terms. Any definitive claims on the matter would require an extensive, in-depth study whose scope greatly exceeds the framework of our present discussion.

Nonetheless, with a degree of prudence, we can still observe certain analogies to the particular elements of the missing miniature. The gesture of handing over a book with a hand covered by some fabric is extremely rarely found in Ottonian art.<sup>230</sup> Generally speaking, the motif of refraining from touching something with a bare hand was almost exclusively reserved to compositions depicting contacts between people and Christ after his crucifixion: most often in the scenes of the Descent from the Cross and the Entombment; or after the Resurrection—the Appearance of Jesus to Mary Magdalene (*Noli me tangere*). In almost every case the message is fairly evident, the sacred body cannot be touched by the profane, save through the fabric of their clothes. Possibly, a certain Byzantine influence can be traced in our miniature, as some researchers have suggested. What is most important from our perspective, however, is the fact that this particular element is not merely a random choice made by the artist, but rather a fairly unambiguous message.

Mathilda does not touch the book to emphasize its sacredness—after all, she herself remains in the sphere of the *profanum*.<sup>231</sup> It is possible that the duchess—by exposing her connection to the mortal, sinful plane—wished to further expiate herself through the very popular in those days act of self-diminishment and stressing one's own spiritual imperfections.<sup>232</sup> What is most significant about this particular element, however, is naturally the fact that Mieszko II, in being able to touch the book with his bare hand, was

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<sup>230</sup> Beuckers, “Das ottonische Stifterbild”, p. 75—notices this gesture only once, when Christ himself is the one who receives the book. Sometimes, the palm was fully exposed because the author of the picture intended to emphasize the existence of extraordinary holiness, e.g. in the famous scene from the Sacramentary of Henry II (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Clm 4456, fol. 11r) Christ is crowning Henry II and angels beside him are holding the holy Spear and the Sword of the Reich.

<sup>231</sup> Further context of the issues: Veron Kessel, “Frauen als Auftraggeberinnen von illuminierten liturgischen Handschriften”, in *Liturgie und Frauenfrage. Ein Beitrag zur Frauenforschung aus liturgiewissenschaftlicher Sicht*, eds. Teresa Berger, Albert Gerhards, Hansjakob Becker (St Ottilien, 1990), pp. 195–210, p. 199ff.

<sup>232</sup> *I who have been smelling badly as a dead dog and lying in thick mud of my sins for a long time because of the mud of the misdeeds killing me—woe is me!—I am lying with relish like a dirty pig—Bruno of Querfurt on himself in his preface to the ‘Life of the Five Brothers Martyrs’: Vita Quinque Fratrum, p. 27: qui occidentium me scelerum stercore mortuus canis dudum feteo, et in peccatorum meorum crasso luto, heu me, sordida sus delectabiliter iaceo.*

placed by the author of the miniature's iconography in the same sphere as the dead and resurrected Jesus Christ.<sup>233</sup>

The sacral character of the Polish king is further emphasized by the proper *decorum*. The ruler was depicted frontally—which signified his high standing—his head only slightly inclined towards Mathilda handing him the book. Mieszko II was presented in the full splendour of his royal majesty: seated on a throne, a crown on his head and a royal sceptre in his hand. All these elements were typical of all representations of monarchs of the time. The lack of a spear that would reflect the gift of Otto III, a copy of the sacred spear used then as the symbol of power, is not surprising. A comparison with the respective majestic portraits of the German rulers clearly demonstrates that they would also not be depicted wielding the spear,<sup>234</sup> but rather—as in the case of Mieszko II—a short sceptre (*sceptrum*), or a long staff with a bulbous top (*baculus*).<sup>235</sup>

The manner of Mieszko II's portrayal falls perfectly into the most representative pattern of royal imagery, which was naturally in line with the character and the message of the codex as a whole. After all, the text surrounding the illustrations manifests, or even ostentatiously emphasizes, the royal status of the gift's recipient. At the same time, however, there is no indication that the seat occupied by Mieszko II was to remind, or even allude to, the Aachen throne of Charles the Great, which allegedly, according to Ademari of Cabannes, had been passed on to Boleslav Chrobry by Otto II in the year 1000.<sup>236</sup> Also the crown worn by Mieszko II does not necessarily need to be associated with the imperial diadem supposedly gifted to the Polish

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<sup>233</sup> The book was in this case a kind of insignia, because it was associated with the sphere of the sacred: Hagen Keller, "Herrscherbild und Herrschaftslegitimation. Zur Deutung der ottonischen Denkmäler," *FMS* 19 (1985), 290–311, p. 299; see also: Joachim Ott, "Vom Zeichencharakter der Herrscherkrone. Krönungszeremoniell und Krönungsbild im Mittelalter: Der *Meinzer Ordo* und das *Sakramentar Heinrichs II.*," in *Zeremoniell als höfische Ästhetik in Spätmittelalter und früher Neuzeit*, eds. Jörg J. Berns, Thomas Rahn (Tübingen, 1995), pp. 534–571, p. 555ff.

<sup>234</sup> This weapon was the old insignia of chieftainship, especially in a war; wider connotations of the issues: Eckhard Neumann, *Herrschafts- und Sexualsymbolik. Grundlagen einer alternativen Symbolforschung* (Stuttgart, 1980).

<sup>235</sup> Skubiszewski, "W służbie cesarza", p. 36ff.; Stefan Patzold, "Verzeien, Schenken und Belohnen. Zu den Herrschaftsvstellungen der Ottonenzeit", in *Die Ottonen. Kunst—Architektur*, pp. 25–49; Percy E. Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik. Beiträge zur ihrer Geschichte vom dritten bis zum sechzehnten Jahrhundert*, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1954), p. 238ff.

<sup>236</sup> *Ademari Cabannensis Chronicon*, p. 153.

ruler in Gniezno.<sup>237</sup> Although the surviving miniatures portraying Otto III would typically include a crown with three sides and as many pinnacles visible from the front, but the same was generally not uncommon in the early 11th century.<sup>238</sup>

Generally speaking, any more specific claims pertaining to the discussed miniature are vulnerable to dispute as, considering the unique character of the composition as a whole, there is hardly sufficient iconographic evidence to support such statements. It is even difficult to ascertain whether the garments worn by Mieszko II, including the insignia of his power, were necessarily presented to reflect typically Ottonian design. Admittedly, the abbey of St. Gallen, where the codex and the miniature were probably compiled,<sup>239</sup> was at the time one of the main cultural centres of the empire and boasted close connections with the imperial court. However, there is nothing to suggest any special relation between the Alpine monastery and Otto III himself. Notably, as far as we are able to determine, no book portraying the emperor, or even commissioned by him, was ever written there.<sup>240</sup>

Therefore, the only viable claim that we can make about the insignia borne by Mieszko II, as portrayed by the miniature in Mathilda's codex, is that their shape corresponds with the similar properties in other majestic depictions of monarchs from the Ottonian period.<sup>241</sup> The above conclusion will have to suffice and is, in fact, fairly satisfactory from the perspective of the premise proposed in these deliberations. It does, after all, indicate that in the opinion of the author responsible for the general concept of the analysed miniature, Mieszko II emerges as a regal figure, compatible in every respect with the monarch of Germany, or any other ruler from the cultural and civilizational realm of post-Carolingian Europe.

It should prove helpful and interesting at this point to consider how the analysed composition depicting the donator and recipient of the codex can be placed in the general pattern or stereotypic approach to iconography in the discussed period, particularly in terms of dedicational representations.

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<sup>237</sup> See: Schramm, Berghaus, Gussone, *Die deutschen Kaiser und*, pl. 105 (p. 375ff.), pl. 106; pl. 107; pl. 108; pl. 109; pl. 149; also: Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik*, vol. 2, p. 284ff.

<sup>238</sup> Hugo Steger, 'David Rex et Propheta'. *König David als vorbildliche Verkörperung des Herrschers und Dichters im Mittelalter, nach Bildarstellungen des achten bis zwölften Jahrhunderts* (Nürnberg, 1961), no. 460.

<sup>239</sup> Kürbis, "Epistola Mathildis Suevae", p. 63f.

<sup>240</sup> Thomas Zotz, "Kaiser Otto III. und das Herzogtum Schwaben", in *Menschen, Mächte, Märkte. Schwaben vor 1000 Jahren und das Villingener Marktrecht*, ed. Casimir Bumiller (Villingen – Schwenningen, 1999), pp. 91–115.

<sup>241</sup> Pietrusiński, "Epistola Mathildis Suevae", p. 63ff.

Although the art of the 10th and 11th c. did not create a single, uniform format of iconographic scenes depicting presentations of gifts in the form of books, we can refer to Josef Prochno,<sup>242</sup> an eminent German researcher of dedicational miniatures, and his categorisation of their four major types that generalise the great richness of forms such compositions tended to take: 1/a donation image (where A presents an object to B); 2/ a devotional image (A worships B by presenting him with a book); 3/ an image of a writer (A writes, B appears in another section of the work, or does not appear at all); 4/ a figurative image (A appears without any apparent connection with B who may not be depicted at all). The abovementioned categories are still employed in various considerations pertaining to miniatures dating back to Ottonian and early Salian times.<sup>243</sup>

Naturally, our particular miniature falls fairly evidently in the first of the proposed categories. It is also possible that in terms of character, almost verging on actual adoration, it can be said to display certain qualities in line with the second group of illustrations distinguished by the German researcher. However, in neither the first or the second category can we find a single example of an image structurally similar to the miniature in Mathilda's codex.

The archetype for all representations of a frontally depicted, enthroned king and a bowing gift bearer or gift bearers to the side, is found in the scene of the Three Magi (Kings, Wise Men) presenting their gifts to Jesus Christ.<sup>244</sup> It is fairly clear that the use of said pattern while portraying enthroned rulers would signify the claim of them being Christ's representatives on the mortal plane, which was a way for the epiphany of the universal ruler to legitimise the power wielded by earthly kings. The above convention was common to all known miniatures representing women bearing gifts to Otto II and Otto III. In the case of those examples, the female figures constituted personifications of particular regions, even to the point of identifying them with fitting captions.<sup>245</sup> They would present the emperor with the symbolic riches of their lands, acknowledging his authority, and bowing their crowns in respect for his majesty.<sup>246</sup>

<sup>242</sup> Prochno, *Das Schreiber- und Dedikationsbild*.

<sup>243</sup> Beuckers, "Das ottonische Stifterbild", p. 64.

<sup>244</sup> Beuckers, "Das ottonische Stifterbild", p. 64.

<sup>245</sup> Wilhelm Weizsäcker, "Imperator und huldigende Frauen", in *Festschrift für Karl Gottfried Hugelmann zum 80. Geburtstag*, ed. Wilhelm Wegener, vol. 2 (Aalen, 1959), pp. 815–831.

<sup>246</sup> Which links this composition scheme with the apocalyptic adoration of Christ by 24 kings (Rev. 4,4–10 e.a.): Günter Binding, Bettina Jost, Jochen Schröder, "Zur Ikonologie der

It is of course unlikely that the image found in Matild's codex was modelled after said compositions in imperial volumes. However, the certain perceivable similarity in terms of their general pattern suggests the possibility of a common ideological basis. Where in one case, the personified representations of countries bring the gift of their innate riches, Mathilda passes on to Mieszko the cultural and civilisational wealth of her own land: a book containing the most important regulations of the annual liturgical cycle, a token that would have been of great value to any monarch in those days. Incidentally, both Swabia, the duchess's country of origin as mentioned in the caption included with the miniature, and her husband's duchy of Lotharingia, were at that time famous as repositories of Christian knowledge and tradition.<sup>247</sup>

From our present-day perspective, it is difficult to say anything definite about the actual spiritual benefits that could have resulted from Mathilda's foundation. With relative certainty we can assume, however, that through her actions the duchess wished to place herself in the circles of religious women (*mulieres suadentes*)<sup>248</sup> involved in spreading and strengthening the faith in the outer regions of the Christian world, to which Poland undoubtedly belonged at the time.<sup>249</sup> Besides, the donation itself would have been perceived as an act of voluntary contribution, bringing the donator closer to the sphere of holiness and binding her to it. Such acts were seen as a form of declaration of faith and were commonly compared to the deeds of saints, ascetics and martyrs.<sup>250</sup>

An important incentive for the idea of the foundation could have been the desire to preserve the memory of a pious deed and the person who performed it (*memoria*), both of which were in this case documented by the

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Aachener Pfalzkapelle nach den Schriftquellen", in *Mönchtum—Kirche—Herrschaft 750–1000*, eds. Dieter R. Bauer, Rudolf Hiestand, Brigitte Kasten (Sigmaringen, 1998), pp. 187–211.

<sup>247</sup> Helmut Beumann, "Die Bedeutung Lotharingens für die ottonische Missionspolitik im Osten", *Rheinische Vierteljahrsblätter* 33 (1969), 14–46.

<sup>248</sup> Jacek Banaszkiwicz, "Dobrawa 'christianissima' i Mieszko poganin (Thietmar, IV, 55–56; Gall, I, 5–6)", in *'Nihil superfluum esse'. Prace z dziejów średniowiecza ofiarowane Profesor Jadwidze Krzyżaniakowej*, ed. Jerzy Strzelczyk, Józef Dobosz, Poznań 2000, pp. 85–93; Homza, "The Role of Saint Ludmila, Doubravka".

<sup>249</sup> This peripheral placing of Poland is visible also in the letter of Mathilda, where there was an entry on Boleslav the Brave converting the most savage peoples—*Codex Mathildis*, p. 139.

<sup>250</sup> Beuckers, "Das ottonische Stifterbild", p. 99f.; see also: Carola Jäggi, "Stifter, Schreiber oder Heiliger? Überlegungen zum Dedikationsbild der Bernward-Bibel", in *Für irdischen Ruhm und himmlischen Lohn. Stifter und Auftraggeber in der mittelalterlichen Kunst*, eds. Hans-Rudolf Meier, Carola Jäggi, Philip Büttner (Berlin, 1995), pp. 91–107.

iconographic representation.<sup>251</sup> Thus, the foundation became equivalent to a permanent prayer as every use, or even presence of the book during the celebration of a religious service would mean that the person who had founded it—not to mention their image on an illustration—was in a way participating in the liturgy as well. Following the above train of thought, we could conclude that the iconographic incentive for documenting a founders of a book to be gifted, as perceived from our modern-day perspective, would seem to lie not as much in demonstrating one's piety, generosity or wealth, but rather in employing said images as appellative devices. In other words, it seems to have been more important for the image to characterise the founder as a pious person (and to have the gift included in the liturgy), than to document a particular act of piety—i.e. the goal was to manifest one's own merits in preparation for the Final Judgement.<sup>252</sup>

The aforementioned sphere of spiritual concerns undoubtedly inspired the duchess in her undertaking. The same does not mean, however, that there is no validity to claims suggesting that the genesis of the codex lies mainly in the realm of the political. We cannot forget that at the time of her founding the codex, Mathilda was campaigning in support of her son Conrad involved in a conflict with the newly elected (in 1024) Salian ruler of Germany, incidentally the husband of Mathilda's own sister, Gisela.<sup>253</sup>

The feuds begun, as we know, after Henry II's death, amidst the subsequent struggle for the throne. Opponents of Conrad II put forward their own candidate, Mathilda's son—also known as Conrad the Younger, whose rights to the throne were equally legitimate as those of his rival.<sup>254</sup> The opposition to Conrad II's candidacy was based mainly in Rhineland and Lotharingia and counted in its ranks the archbishop of Cologne, Pilgrim.<sup>255</sup> Similarly reluctant sentiments towards the Salian candidate were expressed by the dukes of Upper Lotharingia: Dietrich, d. in 1026, and later his son Frederick—Mathilda's husband, as well as the lord of Lower Lotharingia, Goselo. Additionally, all the mentioned aristocrats enjoyed the support of their local bishoprics.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Beuckers, "Das ottonische Stifterbild", p. 102.

<sup>252</sup> Beuckers, "Das ottonische Stifterbild", p. 102; Czech chronicler Kosmas wrote a story on foundations of Henry II, which took him to bring salvation—*Cosmae Pragensis Chronicon*, 67f. (1,37).

<sup>253</sup> Labuda, *Mieszko II. Król*, p. 63.

<sup>254</sup> *Die Salier und das Reich*, p. 16f. (Stammtafel der Salier).

<sup>255</sup> Heinz Wolter, *Die Synoden im Reichsgebiet und in Reichsitalien von 916 bis 1056* (Padernborn, 1988), pp. 295–297, p. 306f.; Rudolf Schieffer, "Erzbischöfe und Bischofskirche von Köln", in *Die Salier und das Reich*, vol. 2, pp. 1–29, p. 2.

<sup>256</sup> Labuda, "Mieszko II. Król", p. 65f.

It has also been suggested that the members of the opposition included Count Palatine Ezzo, father of Richeza—Mieszko II's wife. The latter noble was associated by bonds of church authority with archbishop Pilgrim, however, the question of his involvement remains disputable.<sup>257</sup>

The first stage of the conflict between the mentioned lords and the Salian claimant concluded in a settlement reached during the congress of Kamba on 4th September, 1024, where Conrad the Elder was elected king and crowned, only four days later, by one of his most ardent supporters—the archbishop Aribo of Mainz. However, it did not take long for the opposition to rise again. At the time, duke Ernst II of Swabia, Gisela's son from her first marriage, took up a prominent position among the dissatisfied nobles. Military struggle ensued. The conflict was eventually resolved by the settlement of Aachen, reached during the Christmas congress of 1025 which, a potentially notable fact, was attended by count palatine Ezzo. It was not until February of the following year, however, that duke Ernst in the end also surrendered to the new king.

Later, as Conrad II travelled to Italy to solidify his power and seek the emperor's crown, the duke of Swabia rose against the monarch one more time. He was joined, among others, by Mathilda's son Conrad and husband Frederic.<sup>258</sup> Eventually, the rebellion was conclusively quenched in July 1027. Once his opponents, having been defeated in the field, ritually humbled themselves in front of his majesty (*deditio*),<sup>259</sup> Conrad II returned some of them to his good graces. The latter group included Conrad the Younger. Following the described events, Mathilda's son would not oppose the king again. Also his mother, after all the close in-law Conrad II's (the emperor since Easter 1027), must have come to terms with her sister's family as she later often visited the court and there are no accounts of any further conflicts between either the sisters or their offspring.<sup>260</sup>

The presented situation was the political background against which the discussed codex was compiled. Researchers generally agree that the book was created in relation to an alliance that existed between the German opposition to Conrad II and Mieszko II or, alternatively, was an element of a campaign aimed at establishing such an alliance.<sup>261</sup> The fact of the matter is, however,

<sup>257</sup> Schieffer, "Erzbischöfe und Bischofskirche", p. 4.

<sup>258</sup> Labuda, *Mieszko II. Król*, p. 66.

<sup>259</sup> Althoff, "Zur Bedeutung symbolischer", p. 382; Kai-Peter Ebel, "Huld im 'Herzog Ernst B'. Friedliche Konfliktbewältigung als Reichslegende", *FMS* 34 (2000), 186–212, p. 208ff.

<sup>260</sup> Labuda, *Mieszko II. Król*, p. 75f.

<sup>261</sup> Reitemeier, *Die christliche Legitimation von*, pp. 159, 165.

that there are no surviving sources to confirm the existence at that time of said political associations between the duchess and her circles and the Polish ruler. Moreover, among all members of the party supporting the candidacy of Conrad the Younger, which included many highly eminent nobles, we find none whose even casual contacts with the Piast would be directly confirmed by sources.

Researchers analysing the text of the codex emphasize the impressive erudition of the author, or authors, of the dedicational letter, evidenced by its flawless compatibility with the other sections of the book: the sequence and the miniature, as well as the particularly adequate—befitting the royal status of its recipient—choice of the main content of the book. The above observation seems to rule out the possibility that Mathilda, a member of secular nobility, would have been able to herself decide upon the subject matter and content of the codex. It is far more likely that the compilation of the entire volume was commissioned to a particularly well educated clergyman. Some researchers suggest that the authorship of the letter and the assembly of texts for the entire book may be attributed to Brun, the duchess's son and future bishop of Würzburg.<sup>262</sup> In the absence of any specific source information on the matter, the question of actual authorship of the codex may well remain unresolved. From our perspective, however, a much more pressing question is that of the source of the actual knowledge so skilfully compiled into the analysed volume.

In terms of the latter issue, unlike the question of authorship, we may attempt a somewhat more in-depth analysis. We do know that in 1031, Mieszko—son of Boleslav Chrobry—married Richeza, the daughter of count palatine Ezzo of Rhineland. It is through the court of the magnate and his wife Matlda, Otto III's sister, that news of the distant, Slavic ruler must have reached the western parts of Germany. After all it is highly unlikely that the circles of the count palatine would not have been interested in presenting Mieszko II as favourably as possible and in accordance with the rank of his wife, a granddaughter of Otto II himself. In fact, they were rather likely to have propagated, maybe even co-created the Piast ruler's monarchic image.

We know little of any closer contacts between the duchy of Upper Lotharingia and the house of count palatine Ezzo.<sup>263</sup> However, the lands of the

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<sup>262</sup> Labuda, *Mieszko II. Król*, p. 63f.; Alfred Wendehorst, "Bischöfe und Bischofskirchen von Würzburg, Eichstätt und Bamberg", in *Die Salier und das Reich*, vol. 2, pp. 225–249, p. 232f.

<sup>263</sup> Helmut Kluger, "*Propter claritatem geberis*. Genealogisches zur Familie der Ezzonen", in *Köln. Stadt und*, pp. 223–258, p. 243f.; see also: Emil Kimpen, "Die ezzonische Vewandschaft der rheinischen Pfälzgrafen", in *Coburg mitten im Reich. Festgabe zum 900. Gedenkjahr der*



two families were located relatively close to each other,<sup>264</sup> thus encouraging the development of mutual relations: be it cooperation or conflict. Still, no mention reached our times of the count palatine assisting in any way the Rhineland opposition in their struggle against Conrad II, a fact which may well have influenced the creation of the codex. We know for certain that the two lords met each other on several occasions. One such time was during the congress between the elites of Lotharingia and Rhineland and the German ruler, which took place in Aachen on Christmas day of 1025. The gathered lords included Frederick—Mathilda’s husband, Dietrich—her father-in-law, as well as count palatine Ezzo.<sup>265</sup> The purpose of the meeting was reconciliation between the newly elected ruler and his political opponents, and in that the congressed was a success.

However, it would be rather farfetched to directly associate the assembly aimed at achieving peace with the codex analysed here. After all, the book conveys certain overtones of quite evident contestation of Conrad II’s authority.

Even if we accept that the information on Polish rulers, as depicted in the codex, was not derived directly from the court of count Ezzo, news of the count palatine’s son-in-law and his lands would still have eventually reached the lords of Lotharingia. And as many of the nobles in the area stood in opposition to Conrad II, they naturally sought contact with the other known adversary of the German ruler, i.e. Mieszko II. Likely, that desire was realised by commissioning the compilation of the codex.

To sum up the above deliberations, we can observe that the portrayal of the Polish king in the initial parts of Mathilda’s codex was exceptionally favourable. Although a ruler of a distant country located somewhere on the outer rim of western civilisation, in the eyes of the author (authors?) of the volume Mieszko was a fully legitimate monarch who could boast the very same attributes as any other member of royalty in the post-Frankish culture. Naturally, the acknowledgement of the Piast’s royal status was in no way synonymous with recognising his sovereignty. Relations between the Polish

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*ersten Erwähnung der Ur-Coburg und ihrers Umlandes*, ed. Friedrich Schilling, vol. 1 (Kallmünz, 1961), pp. 184–201.

<sup>264</sup> Emil Kimpfen, “Ezzonen und Hezeliniden in der rheinischen Pfalzgrafschaft”, *MIÖG ErgBd* 12 (1933), 1–91; Franz Steinbach, “Die Ezzonen. Ein Versuch territorialpolitischen Zusammenschlusses der fränkischer Rheinlande”, in *Das erste Jahrtausend*, pp. 848–867; Schreiner, *Królowa Rycheza, Polska*, p. 40.

<sup>265</sup> Kürbis, “Epistola Mathildis Suevae”, p. 76; Labuda, *Mieszko II. Król*, p. 62ff.; Ursula Lewald, “Die Ezzonen. Das Schicksal eines rheinisches Fürstengeschlechtes”, *Rheinische Vierteljahresblätter* 43 (1979), 129–180, p. 130f.

king and the emperor would always be marked by a form of dependence—the monarch was meant to become the field commander (possibly one of the commanders) of the Christian empire. In terms of the particulars of said plan little is known for certain. We may, however, venture a thesis that the message carried by the gift from the duchess of Lotharingia constituted a reminder of the political policies advocated by Otto III in the last years of his reign.

A distant undertone of the matters discussed above can also be traced in the already quoted sentence by the unknown author of the *Foundation Charter of the Monastery in Brauweiler*, expressing evident disappointment that despite all hopes, the marriage between Richeza and Mieszko II did not unite the “Slavic kingdom” with the empire.<sup>266</sup>

### 3.3 MISAKO IPSE SUIQUE, IMMO DIABOLI SATELLITES<sup>267</sup>— MIESZKO II, SERVANT OF THE DEVIL

It is very difficult to formulate any viable generalisations pertaining to the times of Mieszko II, as the surviving sources bear little reference to the reign of this ruler. At the same time, it seems that in terms of the problems discussed here, it was in this particular period that the German perception of Poland changed most radically.

The previous section was devoted to a highly positive appraisal of the Piast. In fact, however, *Mathilda's Letter* is rather exceptional in this respect, while most of the surviving accounts written in Germany in the discussed period and conveying some mention about Poland were to a lesser or greater extent unfavourably disposed towards Mieszko II and his kingdom. The pattern of negative commentaries pertaining to the Piast state, which had solidified in earlier decades, would now become commonplace. More importantly still, given the far lesser interest in the eastern neighbour when compared to that in Thietmar's times, the character and general tone of these opinions was not far from the style typically employed in post-Carolingian writings when depicting pagan states and rulers.

It is symptomatic that the weakening of the Piast state coincided with its almost negligible visibility in the commentaries of German observers of the day. Furthermore, the same was also combined with a certain manner of description, i.e. placing all contexts relating to Poland as if on the very edge

<sup>266</sup> *Actus fundatoris monasterii*, p. 133.

<sup>267</sup> *Annales Hildesheimenses*, p. 35.

of civilisation, sometimes even outside that world of law and order, whose pillar was naturally the emperor.

As viewed by all German commentators, the most significant events in respect to the Polish state to have happened after Henry II's death, were the royal coronations of the Piasts, which took place in 1025. We have already discussed a text full of laudatory comments on the events—the letter of duchess Mathilda to Mieszko II, which conveyed the opinions of a group of West German magnates conflicted with their ruler. Let us now look at the position of the opposite camp—i.e. supporters of Conrad II, as it was their point of view that ultimately dominated the German perception of Poland in the mid 11th c. Furthermore, we will attempt to analyse the origins and formulations employed in particular comments.

### 3.3.1 *The 1025 Piast Coronations as Viewed by German Observers*

Our overview of the attitudes of the German monarch's circles towards the ascension of Polish rulers should begin with the *Biography of Emperor Conrad* (*Gesta Chuonradi II. imperatoris*) composed by Wipo, the chronicler of Conrad II's reign.<sup>268</sup> Said author is of particular interest to us, as his work provides a fairly comprehensive overview of the opinions and sentiments prevailing at the imperial court. For many years, Wipo was a chaplain to the monarch. The function would have given him a remarkable insight into a range of issues of the state; after all, he accompanied his ruler in the never-ending administrative journeys across the vast lands of the empire as well as in his military campaigns.<sup>269</sup> Even the fact that the *Gesta* was not written until 1040–1046, i.e. approximately two decades after the events in question, does not diminish its great value to our research, especially since our main concern is not with the past goings-on per se, but rather their perception and interpretation by contemporaries. In fact, the certain distance in time between the account and the described events may have allowed for the commentaries to better reflect the long-lasting structures of opinions persisting in the author's circles than they would have been written in the heat of the moment.

Let us then consider the way in which Conrad II's courtier perceived the coronations of the Piast rulers. Following the conventions of the day, the chronicler

<sup>268</sup> Wattenbach, Holtzmann, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im*, vol. 1, pp. 76–80; Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and*, p. 189ff.

<sup>269</sup> Tilman Struve, "Wipo", *LMA* vol. 9, p. 243f.; Berschin, *Biographie und Epochenstil*, p. 184.

ordered his material by assigning—sometimes somewhat chaotically—its particular parts to subsequent years, therefore his comment on the discussed events read as follows:

In the same year that I mentioned above [1025], a Slav named Boleslav [Chrobry], the duke of Poland, obtained the insignia and title of a king in defiance of king Conrad's law, but his impudence was overshadowed by his sudden death. His son, Mieszko, as rebellious as his father before him, chased his brother Otto away to Ruthenia for siding with the king. How Conrad punished Mieszko's insolence [...] will be recounted in a later passage.<sup>270</sup>

Indeed, in a passage appropriate to the chronology adopted by Wipo, the author returns to the unfinished "Polish theme". In a succinct and simplified style, sometimes altering the course of actual incidents, he recounts the events of 1031–1033: the war between Conrad and Mieszko and the subsequent coup in Poland. He begins by relating to a conflict within the dynasty between Mieszko and his younger brother Otto who, allegedly persecuted by his royal kin, was eventually exiled to Ruthenia.<sup>271</sup> It is noteworthy that the chronicler did not, or would not, remember the oldest of Boleslav Chrobry's sons—Bezprym. The inadvertence is not necessarily surprising if we consider the significance attributed to blood relations in those days: Otto's mother was Richeza, a member of the empire's aristocracy, while the eldest of the brothers, son to a Hungarian duchess, was—for a German observer—a foreigner, and thus a person of negligible significance.

After the introductory comments, the chronicler recounts Conrad II's (emperor since 1027) reaction to the alleged injustice done to the oppressed brother, as he invades Poland and together with Otto (the Polish king's brother) who joined the troops of Jaroslav the Wise to attack from Ruthenia (notably, a fact omitted by our chronicler), thus forcing Mieszko to flee the country. The refugee found himself captured by Oldrich of Bohemia who wished to hand him over to the German ruler and thus gain his favour. As observed by the chronicler, the emperor contemptuously rejected

<sup>270</sup> *Wiponis gesta Chuonradi II. Imperatoris*, AQDGM vol. 11: *Fontes saeculorum noni et undecimi historiae ecclesiae hammaburgensi necnon imperii illustrantes*, eds. Werner Trillmich, Rudolf Buchner (Darmstadt, 1978), pp. 522–613, p. 562 (c. 9): *Eodem anno quem supra notavimus Bolizlaus Sclavigena, dux Bolanorum, insignia regalia et regium nomen in iniuriam regis Chuonradi sibi aptavit, cuius temeritatem cito mors exinanivit. Filius autem eius Misico, similiter rebellis, fratrem suum Ottonem, quoniam regis partibus favebat, in Ruzziam provinciam pepulit. Qualiter vero eiusdem Misiconis protervitatem [...] perfidiam rex Chuonradus postea compesceret, in loco suo dicam.*

<sup>271</sup> The chronicler did not know at all Bezprym, the elder brother of Mieszko II—Labuda, *Mieszko II Król*, p. 78ff.

the Premislid's adulations. The above example shows how Wipo's account would not only distort the temporal perspective of the described events, but also misrepresent and omit a lot of significant facts. More importantly, the chronicler's work was evidently formulated with the view of emphasizing the magnificence of Conrad's conduct. Indeed, Wipo's account showed the king as the only instigator of commendable and moral political changes in the region previously governed by violence and lawlessness.

In the ideological structure of the *Gesta*, the emperor is the sole guarantor of order and integrity. Therefore, as the chronicler informs us of Otto's murder by one of his own courtiers, he carries on to insist that it was Conrad, that paragon of nobleness, who eventually showed mercy and allowed Mieszko to return to his lands. However, as he reinstated the oldest living son of Boleslav Chrobry, the emperor forced him to hand over control over certain provinces to other members of the dynasty, thus *limiting their power and frustrating their* [i.e. the Piast's] *impudence*.<sup>272</sup>

The account is very selective in its adherence to historical reality and what immediately stands out is the chronicler's failure to even mention the fact that Mieszko's status was greatly diminished as he was forced to renounce the crown. The omission is surprising because it would have seemingly been a logical conclusion to the narrative structure of the account. Notably, we should also observe that in the earlier section of the chronicle where reference to Poland is made, Wipo mentions the "defiance of king Conrad's law" and Boleslav Chrobry's impudence in claiming the royal status and insignia. What he does not mention, however, is the coronation of his son. Actually, the information is never given in his work despite the fact that being one of his monarch's closest men, the author must have been perfectly aware of the actual state of affairs.<sup>273</sup>

The chronicler's bias is evident in the text. He mentions Mieszko II's "rebellious" conduct but fails to provide any logical explanation for the claim. Apparently, the chronicler took the statement for granted and saw its justification in the repetition of the already mentioned "appropriation" of the royal status by Boleslav Chrobry. The chronicler's silence in this respect has to be understood as an additional expression of aversion and disapproval towards the fact of Mieszko II's coronation, which is in fact a fitting synopsis of the whole body of his description.

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<sup>272</sup> *Wiponis gesta Chuonradi*, p. 590, (c. 29) : *sic imminuta potestate minor facta est temeritas*.

<sup>273</sup> Hoffmann, *Mönchskönig und 'rex idiota'*, p. 127ff.

In the text of his biography-chronicle, Wipo does not make the effort to provide reasons for his negative opinion of the Polish rulers' royal ascent—therefore, it can be assumed that the author considered the same to be common knowledge: i.e. obvious to both himself and, at least in his opinion, to his potential readers.

A similar impression of the Piast coronations can generally be found in other contemporary German sources, written in any connection to the imperial court, which touched upon the matter. An example of said tendency would be the *Annals of Quedlinburg*. Admittedly, this particular author's work was somewhat more distanced from the circles of German political elites of the day. Moreover, the annalist seems to have composed his account of the events in progress, as they took place.<sup>274</sup> As for the issue of Piast coronations, his comments read as follows:

When Boleslav, the duke of Poland, learned of the death of noble emperor Henry, his impudence grew greatly and the poison of pride spread inside him to such an extent that he dared anoint himself and insolently, as if by usurpation, crown himself king. But his impertinence and pride were swiftly punished by God. Soon he faced his own sad death sentence. After him [came] his son Mieszko, older by birth but filled with unbecoming [of his eldership] pride, spreading the poison of conceit far and wide.<sup>275</sup>

The quoted passage is the final remark pertaining to Poland made in the annals. The author continued his work only until 1025. The discussed passage was included in a section of the text elaborating on the efforts of Conrad II to reinstate peace and order in his domain after ascending to the throne. The monk from Quedlinburg observes that the empire needed the fatherly guidance of the new ruler, as after Henry II's death—here, the author referred to a *topos*—the land was plagued by famine and fires while Boleslav Chrobry and his son, as we know, were beginning to grow exceedingly impudent. It is important to note the strikingly seamless connection between the attitudes of the Piast rulers and various natural disasters.

The "Polish" comment was structurally placed by the annalist in a passage discussing the manner in which the German monarch dealt with the most

<sup>274</sup> Wattenbach, Holtzmann, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im*, vol. 1, p. 44ff.

<sup>275</sup> *Die Annales Quedlinburgenses*, p. 578f: *Bolizlawo dux Poloniae, obitu Heinrici imperatoris augusti comperto, elatus animo viscere tenus superbiae veneno perfunditur, adeo ut uncto etiam sibi imponi coronam temere sit usurpatus. Quam animi sui praesumptionis audaciam divina mox subsecuta est ultio. In brevi namque tristem mortis sententiam compulsus subit. Post hunc filius eius Misuka, natu maior, haud dissimili superbia tumens, virus arrogantiae longe lateque diffundit.*

pressing issues [*rei publice necessariis*] in Saxony. Only later does the author mention the king's journey to Italy, where he would establish his authority, subjugate Rome and secure the title of emperor. It would therefore seem that in the annalist's opinion—as suggested by the composition of the quoted section of the work—all affairs related to Poland belonged, in a sense, to the sphere of Conrad II's "internal" concerns, and were related to the troubles in one of the provinces (*regnum*) in his domain—Saxony. Possibly we should not read too much into the statement. This particular overtone of the narrative can be explained by the perspective from which the monk perceived the world, cultivating the memory of close relations between his home monastery and the Ottonian dynasts, as well as of the central location of his own country within the state whose interests shaped the eastern policies of the empire, thus also its relations with Poland.

For Wipo, the Piast domain, although an area where the German rulers were actively working under the prerogative of safeguarding morality, was certainly a foreign land. For the court author of the Salian dynasty, Polish issues were already perceived through the prism of the needs and problems of the new centre of power and the new ruler. Minor details aside, however, the two mentioned accounts are still fairly compatible. The negation of the Piasts' royal status that we find in the text by the Quedlinburg annalist closely reflects similar sentiments voiced by Wipo. The general logical correspondence between the two accounts, when it comes to matters related to Poland, is not due to some loanword—the vocabulary and style of writing are different as is the amount of detail included. The Quedlinburg author wrote his work earlier, but Wipo was unlikely to have read his text, and most certainly did not use it as a source of information. The general similarity of certain wordings, such as reproaching the Piasts with being overly proud, breaking the German ruler's laws, etc.—must have been related to the fact that both authors wrote in the general circles supporting Conrad II and his policies, and through this relation, sharing common opinions concerning the desirable form of Piast monarchy and its relation to the empire.

There is one more document of German annals, almost contemporary to the events in question, which contains original commentary on the fact of Piast coronations. The work was composed by an anonymous monk at St Michael's monastery in Hildesheim, in the late 11th century. Source text specialists insist, however, that the annalist copied most of the older accounts, including those pertaining to Mieszko II, from another text which did not survive to our times, and which has been hypothetically recon-

structed as the Older Annals of Hildesheim, supposedly written somewhere in the 1030s.<sup>276</sup> The cultural legacy of St Michael's monastery in Hildesheim is significant and valuable as the complex was among the favourite places of cult visited by monarchs (both Liudolfing and Salian). As an intellectual centre, the monastery enjoyed close connections with the court, as well as the aristocracy, notably including the family of count palatine Ezzo, Mieszko II's father-in-law.<sup>277</sup>

The so called annalist of Hildesheim mentions the events in Poland somewhat "on the side", while accounting for other matters. What makes this particular text particularly valuable for us, however, is the fact that some of the information included here does not appear in the previously quoted commentaries. We find out that in

1028, Mieszko, who had usurped the kingdom of the Slavs several years earlier, acting like a tyrant and against the authority of the emperor, launched a violent attack with his powerful armies against the eastern stretches of Saxony, and having committed numerous acts of arson and pillage, murdered scores of men, captured many women and slaughtered countless children with unequalled brutality. Both he and all his men were truly servants of the devil, raging their unparalleled cruelty across Christian lands, before God's very own eyes.<sup>278</sup>

Firstly, we should observe that the author is the only of all contemporary German chroniclers commenting on Polish matters, to mention the fact that Boleslav Chrobry's son had also acquired the crown. The accounts quoted previously would mention only Mieszko's pride and impudence in breaking Conrad II's laws, none of them went as far as to explain what his behaviour specifically involved. Admittedly, the annalist from Hildesheim does not provide the date of Mieszko's coronation, but his remark about it happening several years earlier than the described invasion on Saxony in 1028. makes it fairly compatible with 1025. The subsequent parts of the text confirm the author's good knowledge of matters related to Poland. However, this text

<sup>276</sup> Wattenbach, Holtzmann, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen im*, vol. 1, p. 42f.

<sup>277</sup> Mathilde Uhlirz, "Zu dem Bericht der Hildesheimer Annalen über den Tod des Pfalzgrafen Ezzo", in *Coburg mitten im Reich*, vol. 2, pp. 39–42; Goetting, *Die Hildesheimer Bischöfe*, p. 174ff.

<sup>278</sup> *Annales Hildesheimenses*, a. 1028, p. 35: *Misako, qui iam per aliquot annos regnum Sclavorum tyrannice sibi contra imperialem usurpabat maiestatem, orientales partes Saxoniae cum valido suorum exercitu violenter invasit et incendiis ac depredationibus peractis viros quosque trucidavit, mulieres plurimas captivavit, parvulorum innumerabilem prorsus multitudinem miserabili inauditaque mortificatione cruentavit et per semet ipsum suosque immo diaboli satellites nimiam crudelitatis sevitiā in christianorum finibus Deo inspiciente exercuit.*



also makes no attempt to clarify why exactly Conrad II was so offended by the fact that the Polish rulers had claimed the crown.

Notably, the comments on the coronation are given jointly with accounts of the Piast's alleged unparalleled cruelties committed during the invasion of Saxony. It may be difficult to assume a straightforward intention to insert some sort of a generic manipulation into the account with the purpose of presenting Mieszko II as the absolute opposite of all qualities traditionally associated with an ideal Christian monarch. However, be it deliberately or otherwise, the author does ultimately portray Mieszko as such an anti-king in the sequence quoted above.

We should mention at this point that the scope of transgressions attributed to the Polish ruler was fairly standard in the case of barbaric attacks as depicted by the historiography of the day: arson, slaying men, enslaving women, and murdering children.<sup>279</sup> It would be difficult to try and make any actual assumptions about Mieszko II's attack on Saxony based on this particular text. It is of course beyond any doubt that the population of the German eastern frontier, most of them of Slavic descent, suffered greatly during the Polish raid.<sup>280</sup> However, the character of actual actions taken at the time was most likely similar to the steps taken by Boleslav Chrobry during his earlier attacks on the same lands, or by Henry II during his invasion of Poland. The manner in which the *Annals of Hildesheim* portray Mieszko II's campaign was most certainly a means of deliberately presenting the Polish ruler in a very specific light.

The connection drawn between the civilised world and the author's own cultural circles, at whose head stood the emperor—the earthly representative of God himself, made it rather natural for his opponent to be associated with barbarity and the anti-world ruled by Satan.

The idea which Thietmar seemed to have employed only as a rhetorical device, here takes on a defined and literal shape. During some edition of the annalist's text—either originally in the 1030s or later—a comparison of the Piast and his men with the servants of the devil appeared. As is often the case with such statements, later compilers would only add and emphasize the original thought to such an extent that in the mid 12th c., the so called Saxon Annalist goes as far as claiming that the Piast troops were allied with

<sup>279</sup> Engels, "Mission und Friede", p. 216.

<sup>280</sup> *RGSEO*, vol. 4, p. 136 (no. 580); Gerard Labuda, "Jedna (1028) czy dwie (1028,1030) wyprawy Mieszka II na słowiańsko-saskie kresy Niemiec? Epizod z dziejów Słowiańszczyzny Zachodniej", in *Słowiańszczyzna w dziejach średniowiecza*, ed. Zofia Kurnatowska, vol. 1, Wrocław 1996, pp. 143–146.

the Lutizi during the attack.<sup>281</sup> There are still several German researchers who seem to believe the truth of the this alliance,<sup>282</sup> despite the same Annals of Hildesheim reporting on Lutizi envoys travelling to Conrad II in the very same year to request his help against

their enemy Mieszko and promise their faithful service in return.<sup>283</sup>

Let us therefore emphasize the fact again: the reports of the Polish ruler's excessive cruelty towards the inhabitants of the Saxon borderland constituted a rhetorical figure in the Annals of Hildesheim, employed to support the claim that due to severe character flaws, Mieszko II was not worthy of occupying a royal throne.<sup>284</sup> The continuation of the "Polish theme" in the work further supports the above claim—the emperor, protector of justice and guarantor of world order—defeated the "Piaśt degenerate" in Lausitz in 1031.<sup>285</sup> Subsequently, Bezprym (surprisingly our author did know of him) exiled his brother and returned to the German monarch the unlawfully acquired crown and other regalia. Furthermore, the new ruler of Poland sent envoys to the emperor to confirm his submission and obedience,<sup>286</sup> which meant a return to the "natural" political order in the region.

The episode with Mieszko II, as presented by our author—with its temporal perspective trivialised and certain significant facts omitted—is concluded by the account of the Polish ruler's arrival in Merseburg, supposedly in 1032<sup>287</sup>—after Bezprym's death, and of his humbling himself before the emperor. After *forgetting the crown and other regalia* [by Mieszko], the German monarch generously reinstated him as ruler of his lands, but set aside a province to be governed by his first-cousin Dietrich, the grandson of Mieszko I and Oda.<sup>288</sup>

The sequence reporting on the Piaśt's inappropriate behaviour opens and closes with a comment on the unlawfully obtained crown. The subsequent and final mention of Mieszko II seems somewhat inconsistent with

<sup>281</sup> Labuda, *Mieszko II. Król*, p. 67ff.

<sup>282</sup> *RGSEO*, vol. 4, p. 136 (no. 580); see also: Engelbert, "Die deutschen Frauen", p. 8.

<sup>283</sup> Labuda, *Mieszko II. Król*, p. 69; see also: *RGSEO*, vol. 4, p. 138 (no. 583).

<sup>284</sup> It is worth remembering that the significance of character traits of the Christian monarch was emphasized in contemporary texts—Fried, "Tugend und Heiligkeit", p. 49ff.

<sup>285</sup> The annalist did not mention of an earlier, unsuccessful campaign Conrad II—see: Labuda, *Mieszko II. Król*, 74f.; Wolfram, *Konrad II. 990–1039*, p. 235f.

<sup>286</sup> *Annales Hildesheimenses*, p. 36.

<sup>287</sup> In fact Congress was held in Merseburg, a year later, in July 1033—*RGSEO*, vol. 4, p. 164 (no. 609).

<sup>288</sup> *Annales Hildesheimenses*, p. 37.—about Dietrich: Hertel, *Imiennictwo dynastii piastowskiej*, p. 112.

the previous passages—it reports on the ruler’s premature death and praises his efforts to promote the still new ideology of Christianity in his country, a process which was to decline after his death.<sup>289</sup>

A comparative analysis of the surviving, original records of German historiography, written until approximately mid 11th c., clearly indicates that the problem of the Piasts’ coronations in 1025 was a key element defining the way authors perceived and assessed Polish rulers. Simultaneously, all sources created within the catchment area of the court, accused Boleslav Chrobry and Mieszko II of usurpation and lawlessness, and denied any legitimization to their claims to the crown.

Modern and contemporary research into the history of the first Polish dynasty and its relations with Germany never seems to have looked deeper into the actual motives that inspired the German ruler to so strongly oppose the royal elevation of the Piasts. Both Polish and German medievalists typically treat the matter as something of obviousness.<sup>290</sup> In our attempt to reform certain details of the particular points of view, as discussed on various occasions, we will only point out that researchers typically assumed—without going too far into the matter—the existence of certain almost generic contradictions between the interest of the empire and the Polish ruler’s royal status. Conrad II’s behaviour has been typically connected to his general reluctance to accept the growing influence of the Piast house which would be derived from, or simply manifested by the crown. The German king’s anger is sometimes also related to the negation of Piast aspirations towards independence of their state (the Roman Empire), whose alleged expression, even realisation, was to be the fact of the two coronations. It is also commonly surmised that, from the Piast perspective, the royal insignia carried along, apart from their evident prestige, the idea of indivisibility of the state—kingdom, which would have also been an undesirable development for the western neighbour.<sup>291</sup>

To briefly sum up the above deliberations: interpretations pertaining to the significance of the Piast coronations tend to revolve around the follow-

<sup>289</sup> *Annales Hildesheimenses*, p. 38.

<sup>290</sup> See e.g.: Sochacki, *Stosunki publicznoprawne między*, p. 77ff.; Erkens, *Konrad II. (um 990–1039)*, p. 152f.; Wolfram, *Konrad II. 990–1039*, p. 231.

<sup>291</sup> E.g.: Jerzy Wyrozumski, *Dzieje Polski piastowskiej: VIII wiek—1370* (Kraków, 1999), p. 104; Stanisław Szczur, *Historia Polski. Średniowiecze* (Kraków, 2002), p. 75; Gerard Labuda, “Wykształcenie się władzy królewskiej u Słowian we wczesnym średniowieczu”, in *Z polskich studiów slawistycznych, Prace na V Międzynarodowy Kongres Sławistów w Sofii, cz. 3, seria 2*. Historia, ed. Juliusz Bardach, Gerard Labuda (Warszawa, 1963), pp. 61–72; also: Sochacki, *Stosunki publicznoprawne między*, p. 75ff. passim; and: Labuda, “O godności króla”, p. 38ff.

ing assumptions: 1/the crown signified sovereignty of the ruler, because 2/by receiving the crown, the ruler was anointed and the act designated the ruler as Christ's direct representative on Earth, and thus, as it was understood in the Middle Ages, a superior over his earthly suzerains; furthermore, the crown meant 3/ territorial indivisibility of the kingdom and the prevalence of primogeniture. The above triad of meanings can be found in the text of nearly every synthesis of our country's history; it has also secured its place in the school-bookish presentation.<sup>292</sup> The above is often accompanied by the fairly common belief that the way in which the crown strengthened the Piast state was not in line with German aspirations, and that this was the direct reason for Conrad II's invasion of Poland and his efforts to prevent the preservation of institutionalised monarchy of regal character.

However, one look at discussed matter from a somewhat broader perspective, not limited by the focus on early Piast relations with Germany of the Salian period, is enough to observe that the interpretative pattern now almost standardised in historiography, seemingly so clear and straightforward, does not seem to correspond to historical reality.

### 3.3.2 *The Piast Coronations of 1025 in the Historical Context*

An analysis of the significance of a crown as insignia of power in 11th century Poland must take into account the situation in Bohemia, as Premislid coronations and the dynasty's own troubles with securing the royal title—fairly well documented by sources—provide invaluable and indispensable comparative material.

We know that the rulers of Bohemia, a country subjected to the political influence of its western neighbour earlier and to a far greater extent than Poland as it had already been subjugated during the Frankish period,<sup>293</sup> much alike the Piasts aspired to the royal title in the 11th c. said ambition could only be realised some fifty years after the first Piast coronations, but the discrepancy is of no significance to our discussion. The observed strategies of both Slavic dynasties took place in the same general period, prior to the offensive of Church reformers of the late 11th century, who would begin to change the understanding of what a Christian king was supposed to be.<sup>294</sup>

<sup>292</sup> See: Josef Žemlička, "Raně feudální monarchie a královský titul u západních Slovanů", in *Typologie raně feudálních slovanských států*, ed. Josef Žemlička (Praha, 1987), pp. 77–92; and: Strzelczyk, *Bolesław Chrobry*, p. 197.

<sup>293</sup> Hartmut Hoffman, "Böhmen und das deutsche Reich im hohen Mittelalter", *Jahrbuch für die Geschichte Mittel- und Ostdeutschlands* 18 (1969), 1–62.

<sup>294</sup> Erkens, *Herrschersakralität im Mittelalter*, p. 190ff.

The earliest information suggesting intentions of preparing the ground for a royal coronation may be found in the various initiatives of Bretislav, most telling of which would have been the attempt to establish an ecclesiastical metropolis in Prague. The ambition was not realised due to protests by the German monarch. During the crisis of the Salian state under the rule of underage Henry IV, Spytihnev II (1055–1061) managed to come into closer contacts with Rome and begin negotiations with the pope, in those days believed to be the dispenser of crowns.<sup>295</sup> Eventually, it was his brother and heir, Vratislaus II (1061–1092), who became Bohemia's first anointed king.<sup>296</sup> The act of the coronation, however, did not take place on the strength of a papal investiture, but through the will of Henry IV after the Premislid's long lasting alliance with the German ruler, during which Bohemian support had proved decisive on many an occasion and secured many victories of imperial armies. The coronation of Vratislaus II was conducted in several stages. Firstly, in 1079, during the congress in Würzburg, in a somewhat vaguely described ceremony, Henry IV performed a sort of an announcement, or preliminary coronation of the Bohemian duke. It is commonly agreed that Henry could not have afforded to perform the complete rite as he himself had not yet been crowned emperor at the time. Only after his own consecration in Rome, the new emperor gained the authority to elevate a ruler to the status of king, which in the case of Vratislaus II took place in 1085 during the synod in Mainz.<sup>297</sup> The act of enthronement and anointment was repeated in Prague later that year, on the emperor's command the second ceremony was celebrated by the archbishop of Trier, Egilbert.<sup>298</sup>

<sup>295</sup> Karl Richter, *Die böhmischen Länder im Früh- und Hochmittelalter*, in *Handbuch der Geschichte der böhmischen Länder*, ed. Karl Bosl, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1967), pp. 165–347, p. 227; Josef Žemlička, *Čechy v době knížecí: 1034–1198* (Praha, 1997), p. 79ff.

<sup>296</sup> Rostislav Nový, "Český král Vratislav II", in *Královský Vyšehrad. Sborník příspěvků k 900. výročí úmrtí prvního českého krále Vratislava II.: 1061–1092* (Praha, 1992), pp. 11–24.

<sup>297</sup> *Cosmae pragensis chronicon*, p. 134, (2, 37); Hans Spangenberg, "Die Königskrönung Vratislavs von Böhmen und die angebliche Mainzer Synode im Jahre 1086", *MIÖG* 20 (1899), 382–396; Žemlička, *Čechy v době*, p. 104ff.

<sup>298</sup> *Annales Pegaviensis et Bosoviensis a.1000–c.1149*, ed. Georg H. Pertz, MGH SS 16 (Hannoverae, 1859), pp. 232–257, p. 237; *Cosmae Pragensis Chronicon*, pp. 140–141, (2, 38); commentary: Wolfgang H. Fritze, "'Corona regni Bohemiae'. Die Entstehung des böhmischen Königstums im 12. Jahrhundert im Widerspiel von Kaiser, Fürst und Adel", in Wolfgang H. Fritze, *Frühzeit zwischen Ostsee und Donau. Ausgewählte Beiträge zum geschichtlichen Werden im östlichen Mitteleuropas vom 6. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert*, ed. Ludolf Kuchenbuch, Wolfgang Schich, *Germania Slavica* 3 (Berlin, 1982), pp. 209–296; Percy E. Schramm, "Böhmen und das Regnum: Die Verleihungen der Königswürde an die Herzöge von Böhmen (1085/86, 1158, 1198/1203)", in *Adel und Kirche*, pp. 346–364.

However, contrary to what is usually associated with the coronations of Piast rulers, the Premislid's crown was in no way a manifestation of Bohemia's independence from the empire.<sup>299</sup> Its underlying meaning was an expression of honorary, rather than administrative, superiority of the Prague ruler over junior dynasts ruling their provinces in Moravia. In fact, however, the royal insignia on Vratislaus's head changed relatively little in terms of the system of internal power in Bohemia and the authority of the monarch over his juniors did not seem to improve—at least not automatically, simply because of the anointment.

In a somewhat broader perspective, it can be claimed that the ritual had a far greater significance in the relations of Vratislaus II with other rulers of central European states who did not have a crown of their own, particularly the Piasts. However, the significance of the act of 1085 was still mainly in the realm of prestige, rather than real politics. The same is not changed by the fact that, as observed by chronicler Cosmas, Vratislaus was proclaimed the king of not only Bohemia, but also Poland, for even if we take it as an expression of the Premislid's long-term plans for the Piast domain, none of them ever came to fruition.<sup>300</sup>

It is noteworthy at this point that for Poland's southern neighbours the crown did not entail the succession of the oldest son, as the law of primogeniture would stipulate—the same being allegedly tied to the idea of the crown. After Vratislaus II's death, the throne was taken by his brother Conrad, the duke of Moravia—at the time the oldest member of the Premislid house, rather than the king's son, Bretislaus. Moreover, Conrad remained a duke and no other Bohemian ruler until the mid 12th c. would even attempt to regain the crown.

Historiography sometimes suggests that the fact of not retaining the royal tradition in Bohemia at the time, can suggest that Vratislaus II received the crown from Henry IV only *ad personam*.<sup>301</sup> Ultimately, however, such claims are purely speculative as no viable source of information on the matter has

<sup>299</sup> Hoffman, "Böhmen und das deutsche"; Schramm, "Böhmen und das Regnum"; see also: Josef Žemlička, "Transformation of the Dukedom of 'the Bohemians' into the Kingdom of Bohemia" in *Political Culture in Central Europe*, pp. 47–64.

<sup>300</sup> Rostislav Novy, "Kralovská korunovace Vratislava II", *Numismaticke Listy* 45 (1988), 129–144; Žemlička, "Rané feudální monarchie", pp. 77–90; Wihoda, "Polská koruna českých", pp. 721–744; Žemlička, "Rané feudální monarchie", p. 77ff.; and: Josef Žemlička, "Polská koruna Vratislava II. aneb čím ho (ne)mohl obdařit Jindřich IV. Glosy ke středověké korunovační symbolice", *Český časopis Historický* 106 (2006), 1–46.

<sup>301</sup> Zdeněk Fiala, "Die Urkunde Kaiser Friedrich I. für den böhmischen Fürsten Vladislav II. vom 18.I.1158 und das 'Privilegium minus' für Österreich", *MIÖG* 78 (1970), 167–192, p. 171.

survived. Interestingly, the situation repeated itself in the case of the next Bohemian king, Vladislaus II—crowned over seventy years later, in 1158 by the will of Frederick Barbarossa and in return for services similar to those of his royal predecessor—did not pass the insignia down to his successors either. Furthermore, also similarly to the case of Vladislaus II, the distinction was of no consequence in terms of the state's sovereignty. In fact, throughout the history of Premislid rule—even after Ottokar I (1197–1230) managed to establish permanent, hereditary monarchy—the royal crown never undermined Bohemia's subordination to German rulers.<sup>302</sup> And the same was not limited to authority over Bohemia, as some Czech researchers have sometimes suggested, of only Roman emperors but indeed pertained to all German kings.<sup>303</sup>

The relations between Bohemia and the empire were by no means unusual. We could easily list many examples of similar feudal dependences of kings on other kings, despite their theoretically equal status. We know e.g. that in the Middle Ages, the German rulers would often, if temporarily, gain the upper hand over the kings of Denmark. In 1134, the Danish king Magnus swore an oath of fealty to Lothar of Supplinburg, the same lord who had previously assented to the Dane's coronation. Adorned in his royal insignia, Magnus ceremoniously carried a sword before Lothar.<sup>304</sup> Within less than twenty years, in 1152, a similar act was performed in front of Frederick Barbarossa by Sweyn III, freshly anointed as the king of Denmark by the German ruler. Around 1128, the already mentioned German Lothar accepted the oath of fealty from a Danish dynast of the Abodrites, Canute Levard, before placing the crown on his head.<sup>305</sup>

Also Hungarian rulers, despite being crowned in an uninterrupted line since the days of Stephen I the Great (1001–1038),<sup>306</sup> were by no means immune to the empire's attempts at subjugation, which had succeeded indeed on a number of separate occasions.<sup>307</sup>

<sup>302</sup> Hans Jäger, *Rechtliche Abhängigkeitsverhältnisse der östlichen Staaten vom Fränkisch-Deutschen Reich: Ende des 8. bis Ende des 11. Jahrhunderts*, (Frankfurt 1959/1960), p. 83ff.; see also: Martin Wihoda, *Zlatá Bula Sicilská. Podivuhodný příběh ve vrstvách paměti* (Praha, 2005).

<sup>303</sup> Zdeněk Fiala, "Vstah českého státu k německé říši do počátku 13. Století", *Sborník Historický* 6 (1959), 23–95; also: Eduard Mikušek, "Ideové pojetí vztahu českého státu k říši německé v dílech dějopisců 10. a 11. století", *Sborník Historický* 26 (1979), 5–59.

<sup>304</sup> Dalewski, "Kaiser Lothar III., Soběslav I".

<sup>305</sup> *Helmoldi Presbyteri Bozoviensis*, p. 188 (1, 49).

<sup>306</sup> György Györffy, *St. Stephen, King of Hungary* (New York, 1994).

<sup>307</sup> Gábor Varga, *Ungarn und das Reich vom 10. bis zum 13. Jahrhundert. Das Herrscherhaus der Árpáden zwischen Anlehnung und Emanzipation*, München 2003.

Similar examples of relations between monarchs can also be found in Western Europe. We could, for instance, comment on the situation of the kings of Burgundy who suffered constant pressures from German rulers throughout the 10th c., only to have their country eventually annexed in 1038 by the empire under Conrad II.<sup>308</sup>

A fitting illustration for the lack of an automatic relation between the ideology of the crown and the notion of sovereignty can be found in the medieval struggle between England and Scotland. Already in the late 11th c. the monarch of Scotland acknowledged the superiority of the English king, and a hundred years later (in 1174), the kingdom of Scotland became fully subjected to English rule.<sup>309</sup> Later involvement of the House Plantagenet in France lessened these ties to some extent, but in the mid 14th century, Alexander III (1249–1286), who occupied the throne in Edinburg, once again swore fealty to English rulers. Edward I even managed to fully annex Scotland into his kingdom and it was not until 1328 that, after many bloody wars and insurrections, England eventually recognised Scotland's independence.<sup>310</sup>

The quoted examples clearly show that in medieval practices there was no straightforward—or automatic, as it is sometimes suggested—relation between a ruler being crowned king and bearing royal insignia, and his independence of other forms of lay authority, the same pertaining even to monarchs of equal, royal status and not only the emperor.

To summarise, in medieval structures of authority, the main factor determining a ruler's dependence or independence would be his military strength and political power. To some extent, also on the element of tradition and the awareness of the cultural respect, played a certain part in establishing mutual contacts and relations of power. Said factors, especially in connection with politics, can be sometimes traced, if somewhat elusively, in surviving sources.

It should also be noted at this point that the Premislids did actually have sufficient force and ample opportunity in the 13th c. to sever the vassal bonds with the empire. The fact that they chose not to follow this path can be

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<sup>308</sup> Brühl, *Deutschland-Frankreich*, p. 485ff.; Bernd Schneidmüller, "Fränkische Bindungen. Heinrich I., Otto der Große, Westfranken und Burgund", in *Otto der Grosse. Magdeburg*, vol. 2, pp. 503–516.

<sup>309</sup> Geoffrey W. S. Barrow, *Kingship and unity: Scotland 1000–1306*, *The New History of Scotland* 1 (London, 1981), p. 23ff.; *Anglo-Scottish Relations 1174–1328. Some Selected Documents*, ed. Edward L. G. Stones (Oxford, 1965), pp. 76–83 (*homagium regis Scocie*); p. 193ff. (the Letter of the King Edward I to the Pope Boniface VIII).

<sup>310</sup> Alexander Grant, *Independence and Nationalhood: Scotland 1306–1469*, *The New History of Scotland* 3 (London, 1984), p. 3ff.



attributed to a certain devotion to the Carolingian tradition combined with a simple calculation of political and cultural benefits of being part of a community of rich and culturally developed regions.

Unfortunately, similar conclusions must also be drawn when analysing statements claiming that the crown would secure a country's indivisibility, there seems to be no evidence to confirm such a relation. The integrity of medieval states was a rather complex question, often dependant on local customs, and its representation in sources is somewhat scarce and rather ambiguous. It is a separate and difficult issue whose particulars are far too complex to discuss here. However, we must firmly state that in the period in question, the royal title and insignia themselves provided no actual protection to the senior dynasty from attacks and attempts by juniors striving to gain control over their own provinces. Similarly, the introduction of various innovations that preceded the establishment of a kingdom would not entail a simultaneous, somehow automatic, introduction of the law of primogeniture.

We will refrain from referring to the example of Scandinavian countries where in the discussed period; every state in the region would have been partitioned at one time or another.<sup>311</sup> Admittedly, in those times the condition of said states differed significantly from the standards of Christian Europe.<sup>312</sup>

Instead, let us have a look at the Carolingian world where divisions of state territories were fairly commonplace. Each of such partitions formed after Charles the Great's death was named *regnum*—a term translated and understood as “kingdom”, with each of the respective rulers referred to as kings (*rex*).<sup>313</sup> In theory, the division was intended only to apply to internal politics, while the state would nominally remain uniform and ruled by a common emperor.<sup>314</sup> In reality, however, the partition leads not only to the anatomization of political authority but also the state as such. Even in the 10th century, in the area of the former east Frankish state where Germany begun to emerge, the existence of single, centralised power was largely due to coincidence and the entangled mixture of traditions and current needs, rather than actual force of a law that would somehow relate to the institution of the crown and kingdom. However, even said state of affairs did not mean territories were no longer separated in order to accommodate younger

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<sup>311</sup> Erich Hoffmann, *Königserhebung und Thronfolgeordnung in Dänemark bis zum Ausgang des Mittelalters* (Berlin – New, York 1976), p. 17ff., 37ff.

<sup>312</sup> Henry A. Meyers, Herwig Wolfram, *Medieval Kingship* (Chicago, 1982), p. 236.

<sup>313</sup> Werner, “Missus-marchio-comes”, p. 206; see also: Schulze, *Grundstrukturen der Verfassung*, vol. 3, p. 90ff.

<sup>314</sup> Brühl, *Detschland – Frankreich*, 353ff.

dynasts, and neither did it prevent side branches of the ruling house to become involved in succession matters. The Liudolfings, i.e. dukes of Bavaria, despite holding a title lesser to that of the kings and emperors, wielded nearly independent power in certain contexts, which at times greatly undermined royal authority.<sup>315</sup> We can also recall Henry the Wrangler's incessant efforts to remove the Saxon line from power and claim the throne for him. In fact, the formulation of the earliest laws pertaining to a transpersonal kingdom and the unity that was to be strengthened by the crown, would not take place until the times of Conrad II (1025–1038),<sup>316</sup> although the provisions would have been preceded by a longer tradition. However, an attempt to justify the drive towards establishing the kingdom of Poland, a country where specific and customary methods of power designation already existed, by referring to phenomena which were still novel in Germany in those days, is a basically misguided approach. The possible attitude towards the idea of the crown in the Piast state can be worked out from the example of Bohemia. After all, much can be deduced from the behaviour of Vlasdislaus II (1140–1172) who never wore the crown publicly in his own lands. The monarch displayed his full majesty granted to him by the emperor only when in congress with lords of the empire.<sup>317</sup> It has been suggested that the ruler was simply afraid of inspiring anger in his relatives supported by noblemen unwilling to accept new customs and rites introduced by the monarch.<sup>318</sup> Interestingly, the only source elaborating at greater length on the majestic rights of the ruler promoted by Barbarossa, does not refer to him as king at all and refers to him merely as duke (*dux*).<sup>319</sup>

To the question of what all the above, only sketched out examples can tell us about the significance of the royal crown in the discussed period, we could answer that the insignia served primarily as a means of communicating the

<sup>315</sup> Seibert, "Bavvarica regna gubernans", pp. 123–142.

<sup>316</sup> Helmut Beumann, "Zur Entwicklung transpersonaler Staatsvorstellungen", in *Das Königtum. Seine geistigen und rechtlichen Grundlagen. Mainauvorträge 1954*, ed. Theodor Mayr, VuF 3 (Darmstadt, 1963), pp. 184–224; It did not prevent the emergence of attempts to extract a new kingdoms within the Empire—see: Johannes Fried, "Königsgedanken Heinrichs des Löwen", *AfK*, 55, 1973, pp. 312–351.

<sup>317</sup> Zemlička, "Rané feudální monarchie", p. 83ff.

<sup>318</sup> Fiala, "Die Urkunde Kaiser Friedrich", p. 175ff.

<sup>319</sup> Even the crown was only named *circulus*—Frederick I Barbarossa in his document of 1158 issued for Vladislav II, where he gave his consent to the coronation of the Bohemian ruler, included the following sentence: "ut liceat prefato duci Boemie (...) in Nativitate Domini videlicet et in Pascha et in Penthecosten, circulum portare, et amplius in festivitate videlicet sancti Venzeslai et sancti Adalbert.—according to: Carlrichard Brühl, "Kronen- und Krönungsbrauch im frühen und hochem Mittelalter", *HZ* 234 (1982), 1–31, p. 6f. Du Cange, *Glossarum mediae et infimae*, vol. 3, p. 339f.—the word *circulus* had explicitly Roman connotations.

status of their bearer. Furthermore, from the Polish, or even west Slavic, perspective, the status was of practical significance only outside the country. Any other traits that historiography would traditionally associate with the crown seem to find little or no evidence in the analysed period. Thus, wearing the crown did not automatically translate to the introduction of a formal monarchy, inseparability of the territories, declared sovereignty, primogeniture, or other aspects typically associated with a kingdom in the mature Middle Ages and later periods. The status of the king always depended on the situation at hand and was never an immediate result of him bearing royal insignia. Similarly, the political context determined various other aspects of the character and extent of his authority. Simultaneously, the above reservations do not necessarily exclude the drive towards various innovations that would have been associated with the notion of royalty, and that were about to be introduced in Poland. They serve only to signify a certain research cautiousness that would prevent us from employing the same mental framework in the discussion on specific, entirely independent situations.

The examples of several European monarchs drawn up above can also illustrate another phenomenon. It would seem that rulers to whom the royal title (*rex*) was applied were far from sharing an equal status. In fact, should we wish to comprehend the entire phenomenon of European “royalty” at the time and attempt some sort of systematisation of the same, we would be bound to encounter severe difficulties. And these would only in part come from the scarcity of source texts and information. The most important circumstance responsible for such overwhelming elusiveness of the phenomenon’s definition is the fact that the historical period in question saw extensive evolution of the institution of kingship which was, to say the least, highly heterogeneous at the time. The powers and scope of duties of a European monarch needed another two centuries, 12th and 13th, to become unified at least to a certain, if rather relative, extent.

### 3.3.3 *The King’s Status and how it Changed throughout the Early Middle Ages*

The coronations of Boleslav Chrobry and Mieszko II were nothing particularly unique, and fairly naturally corresponded to the general cultural context of their times. Therefore, any attempt to interpret the events themselves as well as the related, highly negative German reactions will only be possible when taking into account a variety of circumstances under which they occurred. It is vital to perform at least an approximate reconstruction of the actual significance of royal insignia, followed by an attempt to determine the

particular innovations that the crown would have introduced in the Polish context, both internally and externally.

The above problems would be difficult to analyse without a prior consideration of the traditional basis from which the Piasts' monarchical authority stemmed in the pre-royal period. And although our knowledge in this respect is admittedly fairly fragmentary, it does not justify the direct adoption, found even in professional analyses, of the model of kingship derived from the mature Middle Ages. A closer look at the problem will evidence that in Europe of the day, there was a true mosaic of various types of rulers, whose characteristics are only partially readable for us in the present. Although the 11th century did see the birth of a monarch's ideal which eventually prevailed and remains recognisable, indeed iconic, until today, with its typical "kingly" figure (wearing a crown, an ermine cloak, etc.),<sup>320</sup> traditional ideals still remained fairly strong as did the deep cultural and regional specifics they were rooted in.

Generally speaking, if we theorize and somewhat simplify the disputed problem, the early Middle Ages were characterized by the coexistence of two extremities between which a specific manifestation of a particular type of ruler would emerge. One of said extremities would be the ideal of a ruler-saint, the other the model of a ruler-commander.<sup>321</sup>

Traditional societies always displayed a great need for the institution of sanctified monarchy. People desired to perceive their ruler as having supernatural abilities and it was commonly believed that he was able to directly contact heavenly spheres and through this ability secure the grace and aid of the heavens for himself as well as his subjects. A monarch seen as such would be revered on a par with personages from the sacral sphere.<sup>322</sup> Such a king would sometimes even be treated as so closely bound to the notion of holiness, that he would refrain from letting himself be seen by ordinary people. In this case, the actual, day-to-day duties of a monarch would pass on to a "proxy" who, once this particular form of government became solidified, would be perceived by the community as almost "the second king"—ruling

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<sup>320</sup> A certain summary of opinions concerning the royal authority in Germany before the year 1200—Henry A. Meyers, "The Koncept of Kingship in the 'Book of Emperors' ('Kaiserchronik')", *Traditio* 27 (1971), 205–230.

<sup>321</sup> Wolfram, *Die Germanen*, p. 64ff.; Przemysław Urbańczyk, *Władza i polityka we wczesnym średniowieczu* (Wrocław 2002), p. 65ff.

<sup>322</sup> Gábor Klaniczay, *Holy Rulers and Blessed Princesses. Dynastic Cults in Medieval Central Europe* (Cambridge, 2000), p. 19ff.

the sphere of the profane while his lord served only as a link between the people and the supernatural.<sup>323</sup>

The pattern drafted above would take various forms in particular communities. Sometimes, the two leaders coexisted side by side in certain equilibrium, often one of the kings' position would overshadow the other, and in other cases only one of said types of monarchy could be observed, but with certain, reduced elements of the other incorporated into the way his power was exercised. Our current deliberations do not require enumerating specific examples, particularly since such analyses have already been presented in numerous publications.<sup>324</sup> It is enough for us to bear in mind the existence of the mentioned duality in order to complement our understanding of the cultural context in which the first Piasts sought to build their monarchical status. Notably, the matter as such was not as distant from the reality of the then Poland as one might assume, after all the institution of sanctified monarchy of the old, pagan type was still alive and well in nearly all Scandinavian territories at the time, particularly in Sweden.<sup>325</sup>

Unfortunately, we know very little of the native, Slavic concepts of power and authority. The few surviving accounts left by Arabic travellers, who ventured to the lands north of the Black and Caspian Seas in the 9th c., suggest that eastern Slavs indeed knew both the model of a holy ruler and the institution of dual monarchy.<sup>326</sup> The military exploits of Germanic Varangian military leaders lead, in the 10th century, to the emergence of the ruler-commander type in Ruthenia. The oldest surviving account of the Premislid legend, edited by Christian in the late 10th c., documents the Bohemian attachment to the tradition of supernatural abilities attributed to the founder of the state and the dynasty.<sup>327</sup> However, as evidenced by a number of sources, in the 10th c., both in Bohemia and in the newly emerging Polish state, the ruler was primarily a military commander. There are only certain scarce

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<sup>323</sup> Walter Schlesinger, "Über germanisches Heerkönigtum", in *Das Königtum. Seine*, pp. 105–141.

<sup>324</sup> Leeuw, *Religion in Essence*, p. 116f.; Norbert Wagner, "Dioskuren, Jungmannschaften und Doppelkönigtum", *Zeitschrift für deutsche Philologie* 79 (1960), 225–247.

<sup>325</sup> Hoffmann, *Königerhebung und Thronfolgeordnung*, 12ff.; Władysław Duczko, "Continuity and Transformation: The Tenth Century AD in Sweden", in *The Neighbours of Poland*, pp. 7–36, especially, p. 14f.

<sup>326</sup> *Źródła arabskie do dziejów Słowiańszczyzny*, vol. 2.2, ed. Tadeusz Lewicki (Wrocław e.a., 1977–1985), p. 37, 41f., vol. 3, p. 114; Manfred Hellmann, "Slawisches, insbesondere ostslawisches Herrschertum des Mittelalters", in *Das Königtum. Seine*, pp. 243–277.

<sup>327</sup> František Graus, "Kirchliche und heidnische (magische) Komponenten der Stellung der Přemysliden—Přemysliden sage und St. Wenzelsideologie", in *Siedlung und Verfassung Böhmens in der Frühzeit*, eds. František Graus, Herbert Ludat (Wiesbaden, 1967), pp. 148–164.

elements of the dynastic tradition to suggest that the Piast dukes may have also displayed certain characteristics of ruler-saints.<sup>328</sup> The country of the Polans, having emerged relatively quickly, in approximately the 930s or even 940s if we are to accept archaeological estimates,<sup>329</sup> found itself within the orbit of Ottonian influences and therefore, quite naturally, the character and status of the monarchy, rooted in Carolingian traditions, would influence the understanding of a ruler's tasks and prerogatives in Poland.<sup>330</sup>

There is much evidence to support the claim that the Carolingian model had significant impact on the way in which the character and duties of a ruler were understood in the territories of western Slavs. Although in the 7th and early 8th c., Frankish policies followed the general pattern of dual monarchy; i.e. the Merovingian kings served as sacral rulers while actual control of the state and the military rested with Carolingian major-domos, the two functions: of the sacral ruler and commander, were combined in 751 by Pepin the Short.<sup>331</sup> He was also the one to shape the outline of the new type of monarchy which he later passed on to his son, Charles the Great, under whose rule the model was perfected and solidified. To see how popular this monarchical pattern became in central Europe, it is enough to remember that the word for king [Pol. *Król*] stems from the Slavic pronunciation of the Frankish name Charles [Pol. *Karol*].<sup>332</sup>

Among the intrinsic characteristics of such a ruler—apart from the obvious prerogatives of a military commander and the whole spectrum of related qualities<sup>333</sup>—was the authority to stand in charge of the state's Church: i.e.

<sup>328</sup> Jacek Banaszkiewicz, *Podanie o Piaście i Popielu. Studium porównawcze nad wczesnośredniowiecznymi tradycjami dynastycznymi* (Warszawa, 1986), p. 40ff; Franciszek Kmietowicz, "Tytuły władców Słowian w tzw. 'Relacji anonimowej', wschodnim źródle z końca IX w.", *SA* 23 (1976), 175–191.

<sup>329</sup> Zofia Kurnatowska, "Proces formowania się państwa gnieźnieńskiego", in *Civitas Schinesghe cum pertinentiis. Mieszko I i początki państwa polskiego*, ed. Wojciech Chudziak (Toruń, 2003), pp. 33–49; Przemysław Urbańczyk, "The Role of Archeology in Research on the Beginnings of the Polish State", *Questiones Medii Aevi Novae* 6 (2001), 253–259.

<sup>330</sup> Ingo Gabriel, "Imitatio Imperii am slawischen Fürstenhof zu Starigard/Oldenburger (Holstein). Zur Bedeutung karolingischer Königspfalzen für den Aufstieg einer 'Civitas Magna Sclavorum'", *Archäologisches Korrespondenzblatt* 16 (1983), 357–367; also: Lübke, "Herrschaftsrepräsentation und—Imitation", pp. 105–112.

<sup>331</sup> On the tradition of the Frankish historiography concerning this event—Rosamond McKitterick, *History and Memory in the Carolingian World* (Cambridge, 2004), pp. 133–155.

<sup>332</sup> Which more correctly than the Latin 'rex' (from *regeō-ere* = to rule) reflects the nature of the phenomenon of royalty in the Europe of the High Middle Ages Witold Boryś, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego* (Kraków, 2005), p. 262; Franciszek Sławski, *Słownik etymologiczny języka polskiego*, vol. 3. 2(12) (Kraków, 1967), p. 153f.

<sup>333</sup> Janet L. Nelson, "Kingship and Empire in the Carolingian World", in *Carolingian Culture: Emulation and Innovation*, ed. Rosamond McKitterick (Cambridge, 1994), pp. 52–87.

preside over conventions of bishops, oversee the proper performance of liturgies, and safeguard the Christian morality of his subjects.<sup>334</sup>

From that moment on, two contradictory notions of the actual role of the king would constantly struggle for dominance in medieval Europe: one being the ideal of a warrior, belonging in a way to the sphere of the profane, and the other representing qualities of sacral nature, typically associated with a priest.<sup>335</sup> Depending on the tendencies of a particular period or even the personal preferences of a given ruler, either former or the latter of the two faces of monarchy would predominate.

The Frankish period also saw the emergence of yet another, very important constituent of the ideology of power—the monarchical Messianism. Above all, the phenomenon referred two main concepts. The first was the idea that the crown—notably a symbol stemming from the Roman tradition of the laurel wreath—was in fact a symbol of celestial origin, in a way synonymous to a mark of glory and representing the predisposition for holiness granted by God himself. In their elaborate treatises, theologians interpreted the issue in esoteric terms, focusing on its symbolism and revoking eschatological references when writing of “co-reigning with Christ”.<sup>336</sup> In practice, however, the matter was perceived in rather utilitarian manner, mainly from the perspective of power legitimisation through the postulated connection between the earthly ruler and the king of the *universum*, Jesus Christ, who granted favours and good fortune to his worldly vassals.<sup>337</sup>

The second source of the Carolingian ideology of monarchical Messianism was constituted by the idea of a chosen people. The idea itself was naturally very old; its rebirth in Christian mentality is attributed to St. Augustine. Contrary to the opinions of the famed bishop of Hippo, who rejected any notions of a particular nation being chosen by God, Carolingian thinkers approached the matter rather straightforwardly, without going too far in the nuances of the problem, and proclaimed that the Franks were the new chosen people (*populus Dei*)—the New Israel.<sup>338</sup> It was believed that Christ extended his

<sup>334</sup> Erkens, *Herrscherskralität im Mittelalter*, p. 168f.

<sup>335</sup> Erkens, *Herrscherskralität im Mittelalter*, p. 31f., 157ff.

<sup>336</sup> Percy E. Schramm, “‘Mitherschafft i m Himmel’. Ein Topos des Herrscherkults in christlicher Einkleidung”, in: *Kaiser, Könige und Päpste. Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Geschichte des Mittelalters*, ed. Percy E. Schramm, vol. 1 (Stuttgart, 1968), pp. 79–85; Bornscheuer, ‘*Miseriae regum*’, p. 201f., 220ff.

<sup>337</sup> Desham, “Christus rex et”, p. 381ff.; Kantorowicz, *The Kings of*, p. 47f., 56ff. passim.

<sup>338</sup> Nelson, “Kingship and Empire”, p. 55ff.; Mary Garrison, “The Franks as the New Israel? Education for an identity from Pippin to Charles the Great”, in *The Uses of the Past in the Early Middle Ages*, eds. Yitzhak Hen, Matthew Innes (Cambridge, 2000), pp. 114–161; Joseph R. Strayer, “France: The Holy Land, the chosen People and the Most Christian King”, in

particular protection over the nation and that the Frankish ruler was specifically predestined to be the leader of the Christian world.<sup>339</sup> Following this avenue of thought, every Carolingian monarch was charged with the task of extending his authority over as great a number of Christian subjects as possible, with the view of facilitating their preparation for personal salvation. Consequently, the Frankish state was expected to strive for perfection and reflect the earthly ideal of the celestial universal monarchy—the New Jerusalem, while its lord was to follow the example of Christ, the King of Kings.<sup>340</sup>

This exceptional mandate of the Frankish ruler was manifested, among other elements, through the ceremony of anointment performed since the times of Pepin the Short, a ritual modelled after the Old Testament consecration rites of Jewish rulers,<sup>341</sup> as well as the title of *Dei gratia* used for the first time between 765 and 769 to emphasise the abovementioned celestial legation.<sup>342</sup>

The conviction of being on a mission from God granted the Frankish kings the claim to full control over the Church,<sup>343</sup> as well as obliged them to extend Christianity, also by fire and sword, and enforcing the faith on pagan peoples

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*Action and Conviction in Early Modern Europe. Essays in Memory of E. R. Harbison*, eds. Theodore K. Rabb, Jerrold E. Siegel (Princeton, 1969), pp. 3–16; see also: Ernst Kantorowicz, “*Pro patria mori* in medieval political thought”, in Ernst Kantorowicz, *Selected Studies*, pp. 308–324.

<sup>339</sup> Meyers, Wolfram, *Medieval Kingship*, p. 124; Eugen Ewig, “Zum christlichen Königsgedanken im Frühmittelalter”, in *Das Königtum. Seine*, p. 42ff.; Karl F. Werner, “Gott, Herrscher und Historiograph. Der Geschichtsschreiber als Interpret des Wirken Gottes in der Welt und Ratgeber der Könige (4. bis 12. Jahrhundert)” in *‘Deus qui mutat tempora’. Menschen und Institutionen im Wandel des Mittelalters Festschrift für Alfons Becker zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, eds. Ernst-Dieter Diehl, Hubert Seibert, Franz Staab (Sigmaringen, 1987), pp. 1–31; Hoffmann, *Taufsymbolik im mittelalterlichen*, p. 48ff. passim; Kurt Goldammer, “Die Welt des Heiligen im Bilde des Gottherrschers”, in *The sacral Kingship. Contributions to the Central Theme of the VIIIth International Congress for the History of Religions (Rome, April 1955)*, ed. Percy E. Schramm (Leiden, 1959), pp. 513–530, p. 520ff.

<sup>340</sup> Rosamund Mc Kitterick, “Political Ideology in Carolingian Historiography”, in *The Uses of the Past*, pp. 163–174.

<sup>341</sup> The first Frankish anointment took place in 751, but the oldest coronation confirmed by sources was not held until 800: the coronation of Charles the Great as emperor—Carlrichard Brühl, “Fränkischer Krönungsbrauch und das Problem der ‘Festkrönungen’”, *HZ* 194 (1962), 265–326, p. 266, p. 305; see also: Funkenstein, “Unction of the Ruler”, p. 12ff.

<sup>342</sup> Meyers, Wolfram, *Medieval Kingship*, p. 125; there were appeared words of similar meaning: *a Deo coronatus*—Wolfram, “Lateinische Herrschertitel im”, pp. 19–178; see also: Gabrielle M. Spiegel, *The Past as Text. The Theory and Practice of Medieval Historiography* (Baltimore 1999), p. 84f.; and: Wolfgang Ch. Schneider, “Die Generatio imperatoris in der Generatio Christi. Ein Motiv der Herrschaftstheologie Ottos III. in Trierer, Kölner und Echternacher Handschriften”, *FMS* 25 (1991), 226–258.

<sup>343</sup> Meyers, Wolfram, *Medieval Kingship*, p. 127f.; Werner Goetz, “*Imperator advocatus Romanae ecclesiae*”, in *Aus Kirche und Reich*, pp. 315–328.



along with political rule, or at least superiority.<sup>344</sup> The above consideration brings us close to an issue of utmost importance in the context of the Piast domain in the 10th and early 11th c. There is substantial evidence to suggest that for Frankish ideologists of power, monarchs of neighbouring states were fully legitimised only when the basis for their rule was derived from the authority of Carolingian kings, whom they considered the only rulers appointed by Jesus Christ himself.<sup>345</sup> This attitude towards foreign domains was later also adopted by the succession states of the Carolingian Empire, including, most notably for our deliberations, the eastern Frankish monarchy and the Ottonian state which stemmed from it in the 10th c.<sup>346</sup>

It is also important at this point to observe a seemingly patent fact, but one that is often omitted by historical literature, that is to say that Latin terminology did not prove sufficient to adequately account for the discrepancies between the particular types of institutionalised royalty which functioned in the early Middle Ages. The Latin term *rex* is commonly translated in modern European languages as *king*. Semantically, however, a fact which is often overlooked, *rex* simply stands for a ruler or monarch, without determining any particular characteristics of the same. For instance, the term was used in this general meaning by the chronicler Widukind in reference to Mieszko I.<sup>347</sup> The word was also commonly used by authors to denote foreign, even pagan rulers.<sup>348</sup>

<sup>344</sup> Kahl, “‘Compellere intrare’. Die”, p. 198f.; Hans-Dietrich Kahl, “Die ersten Jahrhunderte des missionsgeschichtlichen Mittelalters. Bausteine für eine Phänomenologie bis ca. 1050”, in *Kirchengeschichte als Missionsgeschichte*, ed. Knut Schäferdieck, vol. 2.1 (München, 1978), pp. 11–76; Erdmann, *Die Entstehung des Kreuzzugsgedankens*, p. 91ff.

<sup>345</sup> This thought, as it seems, never appeared as a doctrine, but it appears in a number of places in the form of scattered opinions which form a kind of ideology—see e.g.: Spiegel, *The Past as Text*, p. 111ff.; in practice, this ideology shows itself as seeking connections with Charles the Great—on different aspects of the tradition of Charles the Great see: *Karl der Grosse*, vol. 4: *Das Nachleben*, eds. Wolfgang Braunfels, Percy E. Schramm (Düsseldorf 1967).

<sup>346</sup> *Die Conversio Bagaoriorum et*, p. 140; Benedykt Zientara, *Świt narodów europejskich. Powstawanie świadomości narodowej na obszarze Europy pokarolińskiej* (Warszawa, 1985), p. 199ff.; Dušan Třeštík, “Zformování se střední Evropy a symbolický rok 1000”, in *České země v raném středověku*, ed. Petr Sommer (Praha, 2006), pp. 11–29, pp. 13, 23—note 7.

<sup>347</sup> This differentiation is not noticed by: Labuda, “O godności króla”, p. 45; or: Labuda, “Rozprzestrzenianie się tytułu”, p. 59—*rex* as if the ruler more notable than *dux*; see also: Stanisław Rosik, “Początki Polski w kronikach niemieckich X–XI w. (w kręgu wiadomości Widukinda z Korwei)”, in *Kolory i struktury średniowiecza*, ed. Wojciech Fałkowski (Warszawa, 2004), pp. 235–252.

<sup>348</sup> *Annales Bertiniani*, p. 34 (king—*rex* as an indication of the Emir of Cordoba), see also: *Vita Iohannis gorziensis*, p. 369f. (c. 115): *legatio regis Hispaniae Aberahamensis*; p. 379 (c. 117): *rex sacrilegus et profanus utpote Sarracenus*.

Simultaneously, the same designation of “king”—“rex” was also employed when referring to an entirely different category of monarchs, i.e. Christian kings anointed with holy oils and formally crowned.<sup>349</sup> Let us therefore once more emphasize the most important observation—in Carolingian Europe, including the lands of western Slavic territories which belonged to the sphere of the empire’s political influence, elevation to the rank of a king signified one’s strong, ideological connection with the Frankish monarchy, as the ceremony of anointment comprised the same sanctified rites as those undergone by Carolingian rulers and their successors.

Such figures could boast a number of qualities unattainable for pagan rulers as well as other Christian monarchs; e.g. those of early medieval Scandinavia, where the institution of kingship was rooted in pagan traditions and somewhat reluctantly incorporated the newer solutions. However, Scandinavian rulers had always been referred to as kings (and the tendency persists in modern historiography), despite the fact that the tradition did not involve crowning or anointment. Instead, said monarchs shared certain characteristics typical of pre-Christian formations.<sup>350</sup>

In the above deliberations, we attempted to present a generalised depiction of matters whose actual complexities are still subject to acute controversies among experts in the field. In doing so, we exposed ourselves to accusations of oversimplification—our goal, however, was to once again accentuate the fact that the underlying meaning of the term “king”, often so straightforwardly understood by historiography, is in fact neither clear nor unambiguous. Moreover, the above comments constitute a basis essential to any attempt at answering the key question as to why the Piasts’ royal ascent was so disagreeable with German rulers.

### 3.3.4 *Salian Monarchs and the Royal Institution in Poland*

It was believed in early medieval Germany that the Liudolfings, and later Salian state was a direct successor of the Carolingian empire.<sup>351</sup> The conviction, apart from being an understandable source of pride and satisfaction,

<sup>349</sup> Wallace-Hadrill, “The *Via regia*”; Eberhardt, *Via Regia. Der Fürstenspiegel*, p. 462ff.; Ott, “Vom Zeichencharakter der Herrscherkrone”, p. 548ff.

<sup>350</sup> Meyers, Wolfram, *Medieval Kingship*, p. 234ff.; Johannes Fried, “Weshalb die Normanherrscher für die Franken unvorstellbar waren?”, in *Die Macht des Königs. Herrschaft in Europa vom Frühmittelalter bis in die Neuzeit*, ed. Bernhard Jussen (München, 2005), pp. 72–82; Bagge, *The Political Thought*, p. 23ff.

<sup>351</sup> Hagen Keller, “Zum Charakter der ‘Staatlichkeit’ zwischen karolingischer Reichsreform und hochmittelalterlichem Herrschaftsausbau”, *FMS* 23 (1989), 248–264; Müller-Martens, “The Ottonian as Kings”, p. 233ff.; Nelson, “Kingship and Empire”, p. 77ff.; there are syntheses

was also an inspiration for the attempts to transform the Ottonian and later the Salian state into a universal monarchy. The lack of a direct connection between the dynasties and the Carolingians, as well as other discrepancies between their state and the Frankish empire, were dismissed by political ideologists of the day who sought out alleged family relations to tie the ruling houses to Charles the Great and his successors.<sup>352</sup> Simultaneously, the political awareness of the elites was merged with the Carolingian tradition, thus shaping the desirable political standpoints. Such was the purpose of e.g. the Frankish Messianism mentioned above, which—after certain adjustments—was later reintroduced into the ideological weaponry of the new dynasties.

The described phenomenon is extremely broad and complex. It is necessary, however, to at least sketch out its character in order to fully understand the analysed problem. Let us therefore evoke the writings of the Saxon chronicler Widukind who suggested, as early as in the mid 10th c., that Frankish authority had passed on to the Saxons by God's decree (*translatio imperii*).<sup>353</sup> Widukind presented the idea by relating a number of adequately stylized events. The sequence is opened with a description of how the treaty of *amicitia* was concluded between the Franks and the chronicler's native tribe.<sup>354</sup> Later, the author elaborates on the fruit borne by the relationship in the form of defeating the Thuringians.<sup>355</sup> An event that Widukind put most emphasis on, however, was Charles the Great's intervention in Saxony, during which the king, with "fatherly" care for the people so close to his heart and despite military resistance, converted Widukind's pagan ancestors and incorporated their lands into his domain.<sup>356</sup> The breakthrough moment in the chronicler's vision of Saxon history—whose culmination was the later ascension to the imperial throne by Otto I, an event dated by Widukind

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which begin the history of Germany from the Frankish empire, although this issue is not that obvious—see: Körntgen, "Königtum, Adel und", p. 83f.

<sup>352</sup> As far as early medieval France is concerned the phenomenon is described by: Rosamond McKitterick, *The Frankish Kings and Culture in the Early Middle Ages. Variorum Collected Studies* (Great Yarmouth, 1995), pp. 21–33.

<sup>353</sup> Beumann, *Widukind von Korvei*, p. 219ff.; Helmut Beumann, "Die sakrale Legitimierung des Herrschers im Denken der ottonischen Zeit", *ZRG Germ. Abt.* 66 (1948), 1–45, p. 21; about the *translatio imperii* see: Goetz, 'Translatio Imperii', (especially) pp. 91, 211; see also: Heinz Thomas, "Julius Caesar und die Deutschen", in *Die Salier und das Reich*, vol. 3, pp. 245–278.

<sup>354</sup> Karpf, *Herrscherlegitimation und Reichsbegriff*, p. 155ff.

<sup>355</sup> *Widukind*, p. 32ff. (1,9); Wolfgang Eggert, "'Franken und Sachsen' bei Notker, Widukind und anderen", in *Historiographie im frühen Mittelalter*, eds. Anton Scharfer, Georg Scheibelreiter (München, 1994), pp. 514–530, p. 524ff.

<sup>356</sup> *Widukind*, p. 44 (1,15).

in 955<sup>357</sup>—was an episode involving the last Frankish ruler to occupy the throne of the East Franks, Conrad I, who allegedly named Henry I of the House Liudolfing as his successor (in 918).<sup>358</sup> The two stages: the passing the power over to the Saxon by the “successor” and a “kinsman”<sup>359</sup> of Charles the Great, and the ascent of his son and heir, Henry I, to the imperial throne constituted—in Widukind’s understanding—the fulfilment of the ideological handing down of the *imperium* by the Franks to the Saxons.

The evidence to indicate that the German elite believed themselves to be the rightful successors of the Carolingians<sup>360</sup> does not end here. Apart from the specific awareness of the ruling class, there was indeed also a certain political continuity between the Frankish state and the Ottonian and Salian state that continued to develop in the 10th and 11th c. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the German rulers treated the Frankish empire as a sort of a base, or model for the policies they were introducing. It was well known in Germany that Charles the Great had managed to impose his dominance over a majority of neighbouring Slavic tribes. Similarly, the monarchs of the eastern Frankish state, which grew out of the Carolingian empire, strove to maintain some sort of supremacy over those tribes, requiring tribute and demanding military aid when the situation called for it.

In consequence, Ottonian Germany also saw the Slavs as their natural “tributaries”. Tradition legitimised, even demanded to conquer, subjugate, and enforce Christianity in Slavic lands.<sup>361</sup> An important element of Ottonian, and later Salian, eastern policy involved the Church structures, whose dignitaries were, to an extent, perceived as imperial officials.<sup>362</sup> The same must be taken into account in the course of any analysis of texts pertaining

<sup>357</sup> Buc, “Writing Ottonian hegemony”, p. 3ff.

<sup>358</sup> Johannes Fried, “Die Königserhebung Heinrichs I. Erinnerung, Mündlichkeit und Traditionsbildung im 10. Jahrhundert”, in *Mittelalterforschung nach der Wende 1989*, ed. Michael Borgolte, *HZ*, Beiheft 20 (München, 1995), pp. 267–318, p. 281ff.

<sup>359</sup> Karl Hauck, “Die Ottonen und Aachen, 876–936”, in *Karl der Grosse*, pp. 39–53.

<sup>360</sup> Fried, “Karl der Grosse”, p. 25ff.; see also: Emil Kimpen, “Zur Königsgenealogie der Karolinger bis Stauferzeit”, *Zeitschrift für die Geschichte des Oberrheins* 103, NF 64 (1955), 35–115.

<sup>361</sup> Kahl, “*Compellere intrare. Die*”, p. 177ff.; the importance of the mission was emphasised by the *ordo* of Mainz, written c. 960—*Pontificale Romano-germanicum*, vol. 1, pp. 246–259; see also: *Widukind*, p. 88 (2,1): ‘*Accipe*, inquit, *hunc gladium, quo eicias omnes Christi adversarios, barbaros sed malos Christianos, auctoritate divina tibi tradita omni potestate totius imperii Francorum, ad firmissimam pacem omnium Christianorum*’; and: Staats, *Theologie der Reichskrone*, p. 133f.

<sup>362</sup> Weinfurter, “Die Zentralisierung der”, pp. 241–297; Tilman Struve, “Die Stellung des Königtums in der politischen Theorie des Salierzeit”, in *Die Salier und das Reich*, vol. 3, pp. 217–244, p. 218ff.

to the relations between Germany and the Slavs in the early Middle Ages, as all chroniclers of the day were in fact members of the clergy. Consequently, authors such as Thietmar, Brun of Querfurt, Wipo, or the annalists quoted above, perceived the German king as the ideological pillar of the world.<sup>363</sup> In their opinion Jesus Christ himself had charged their ruler with authority, elevated him among other monarchs and granted him the imperial crown along with the mission of bringing all Christians together under his direct and indirect influence. Additionally, divine providence would also boon the German ruler with the prestige and authority inherited from his predecessors, particularly Charles the Great.<sup>364</sup>

In the context of these deliberations, it is also important to observe that a vast majority, possibly even all members of Saxon elites desired to derive the ideological basis for their emperor's power not from universal values supported by relations with Rome, both ancient and contemporary, but rather from Carolingian traditions, or—as was the case with e.g. Widukind—from the belief that Otto I had himself earned the right to be the supreme Christian leader after defeating the Magyars in 955 in the Battle of Lechfeld and thus saving Europe from the nightmare of destructive raids by nomadic tribes.<sup>365</sup>

Being aware of the strength of the Carolingian tradition among the Saxons as well as the related idea of being especially chosen by God and therefore superior to other peoples, allows us to understand the reaction of the majority of the German elites to Otto III's policies. The emperor was accused, after 997, of opting for the model of a universal empire, and having a preference for Rome and Italy where he wished to move the centre of gravity of his state. He was also reproached for allegedly diminishing Saxony to the role of merely a province in the newly shaped empire.<sup>366</sup> The frustration of certain east German magnates was further strengthened by the unquestionable advancement of Boleslav Chrobry in the year 1000, whose long-term consequences and repercussions were evidently aimed at crowning the Polish ruler as, a fact of great significance, king in the Carolingian sense, i.e. granting him

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<sup>363</sup> Stefan Weinfurter, "Kaiser Heinrich II.—Bayerische Traditionen und europäischer Glanz", in *Kaiser Heinrich II. 1002–1024*, pp. 15–29, p. 20f.

<sup>364</sup> Kimpen, "Zur Königsgenealogie der Karolinger"; Hagen Keller, "Die Ottonen und Karl der Große", *FMS* 34 (2000), 112–131.

<sup>365</sup> Koch, *Europa, Rom und*, p. 79ff.; Helmut Beumann, "*Imperator Romanorum, rex gentium*. Zu Widukind III, 76", in *Tradition als historische Kraft*, pp. 214–230; also: Bagge, *Kings, Politics, and*, p. 28ff.

<sup>366</sup> Recently new attempts have been made by scholars who distance themselves from old studies to reconsider this problem—Görich, *Otto III. Romanus, Saxonicus et Italicus*.

the access to traditions dating back to Pepin the Short and the related power over the sacral sphere.

After all, we must not forget that Otto III's policies were doubly precedential in the West.<sup>367</sup> Firstly, it was the papacy that claimed exclusive rights to creating new Kings, derived from its part in the coronation and anointment of Pepin the Short.<sup>368</sup> Furthermore, no ruler to date whose power was not legitimised in the realm of Carolingian tradition had ever been elevated to the status of a king, i.e. a ruler wielding sacral authority similar to that of Frankish monarchs. Scandinavian monarchs were referred to as kings only on the basis of the similarity of titles in Germanic languages. In fact, however, in the strict Christian understanding of the designation, they were not kings as such because, in those days, their authority stemmed only from their native cultural heritage. Only Anglo-Saxon monarchs could claim a status equal to Carolingian dynasts, as they employed similar means of demonstrating their position and wielded comparable sacral powers. However, said monarchs legitimised their function by reference to native traditions of old Christendom.

Indeed, there were reasons behind such strong connection between the symbolism of the crown and Rome. We know that ancient emperors would send metal, gilded wreaths—crowns to befriended barbarian chieftains as symbols of their special relationship with the empire. It was from that tradition that the crown eventually evolved. However, such practices were not synonymous with the later rites of coronation. In fact, the earliest known instance of an actual crown being granted by the person entitled to nominate kings, i.e. the ruler of Rome—the Pope, along with the formal permission for the anointment, was not reported until 1002 and pertained to Stephen I of Hungary.<sup>369</sup>

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<sup>367</sup> György Györffy, "Die *corona sancti Stephani regis* zur Zeit der Arpaden", in *Insignia Regni Hungariae* vol. 1, Studien zur Machtsymbolik des mittelalterlichen Ungarn, ed. Zsuzsa Lovag (Budapest, 1983), pp. 55–63.

<sup>368</sup> Hans Hirsch, "Das Recht der Königserhebung durch Kaiser und Papst im hohen Mittelalter", in *Festschrift für Ernst Heymann zum 70. Geburtstag überreicht von Freunden, Schülern und Fachgenossen* (Weimar, 1940), pp. 209–249, p. 219: the author argued that the independence of the papacy in this act only after the struggle for the right of investiture, but the origin of this practice in the West is associated with the anointment given to Pepin the Short—Funkenstein, "Unction of the Ruler", p. 12ff.

<sup>369</sup> György Székely, "Kronensendungen und Königskreationen im Europa des 11. Jahrhunderts", in *Insignia Regni Hungariae* vol. 1, pp. 17–27; Péter Váczy, "Thietmar von Merseburg über die ungarische Königskronung", in *Insignia Regni Hungariae* vol. 1, pp. 29–43; Hirsch, "Das Recht der Königserhebung", pp. 211.

Polish tradition, as reported by Gallus Anonymous, maintains that Otto III, while visiting Gniezno, personally placed his own crown on Boleslav Chrobry's head and left the insignia as a gift to the ruler.<sup>370</sup> Admittedly, such a gesture would seem to follow a certain pattern of the emperor's activity, confirmed by a number of other sources.

Even if we were to doubt the truth of Gallus Anonymous's account, we can surmise, on the basis of other, more reliable data, that when Otto III granted Boleslav Chrobry semi-royal concessions in Gniezno, he initiated a certain process, which introduced the Piasts into the Carolingian tradition. Among several highly significant elements of the emperor's action, one of the most important was presenting a spear to Boleslav Chrobry, which, as was believed in those days, contained a fragment of a nail from the Holy Cross cut from the relic placed in the spearhead of the imperial insignia of power.<sup>371</sup> From the account of Ademar of Chabannes we also know that Otto III presented a similar copy of the Holy Spear to Stephen I of Hungary, who—as reported by the chronicler—was entitled to display the insignia in exactly the same manner and situations as emperor himself.<sup>372</sup> The information derived from the so called version C of the French chronicler's work, a document now fully recognised as a valuable source text,<sup>373</sup> is particularly important, as it allows us—having made the observation on the ideological connection between the Polish and Hungarian spear—to extend our knowledge on the actual significance of the object gifted to Boleslav Chrobry.

The ceremonial imperial weapon, in those days serving only as a symbol of power,<sup>374</sup> carried highly complex and powerful ideological significance, quite unprecedented in those days. It was believed that the original owner

<sup>370</sup> Roman Michałowski, "Relacja Galla Anonima o Zjeździe Gnieźnieńskim—Problem wiarygodności", in *Tekst źródła. Krytyka—interpretacja*, ed. Barbara Trelińska (Warszawa, 2005), pp. 57–64; Wihoda, "Polská koruna českých", pp. 721–744; see also: Percy E. Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen: gestiftet, verkauft, verschenkt, verpfändet. Belege aus dem Mittelalter*, Nachrichten der Akademie der Wissenschaften Göttingen Phil.-hist. Klasse 1957 No. 5 (Göttingen, 1958), pp. 162–226, especially: p. 172ff.

<sup>371</sup> Mieczysław Rokosz, "Wawelska włócznia Bolesława Chrobrego. Przegląd problematyki", *Rocznik Krakowski* 55 (1989), 17–44; see also: Dąbrowska, *La relique Saint Clou*, pp. 48–57.

<sup>372</sup> [...] *regnum ei liberrime habere permisit, dans ei licenciam ferre lanceam sacram ubique, sicut imperatori mos est, et reliquias ex clavis domini et lancea sancti Mauricii ei concessit in propria lancea...*—Ademari Cabannensis *Chronicon*, p. 153, (3,31); see also: Fried, *Otton III und Boleslaw*, p. 128ff.; and: László Kovács, "Die heilige Lanze Ungarns", in *Europas Mitte um 1000*, vol. 2, pp. 902–903.

<sup>373</sup> Richard A. Landes, *Relics, Apocalypse, and the Deceits of History. Ademar of Chabannes, 989–1034* (Cambridge, Massachusetts – London, 1995).

<sup>374</sup> Rokosz, "Wawelska włócznia Bolesława", pp. 17–44; see also: Schramm, *Herrschaftszeichen und Staatssymbolik*, vol. 2, p. 492ff.

of the spear had been the Roman legionary Longinus, who allegedly pierced it through the side of Jesus Christ dying on the cross.<sup>375</sup> Subsequently, God's providence was to have placed the weapon in the hands of one of the first Christian martyrs—St Maurice, commander of the Theban legion. In later times, the spear passed on to the first christened Roman emperor, Constantine the Great.<sup>376</sup> Eventually, the last of the great wielders of the weapon to precede Otto III himself was allegedly Charles, the mighty ruler of the Franks, the medieval paragon of a European monarch.

Perceived in this context, the history of the spear—coupled with the belief that it carried inside its head an actual nail from the Holy Cross—resulted in the common perception of the weapon as a true relic with the power of ensuring victory for its rightful carrier.<sup>377</sup> Further still, opinions had been voiced that its wielder had been chosen by God's providence as an agent of Christ himself, charged by the King of Kings to take command over the entire Christian world.<sup>378</sup> Considering the above, it would be truly difficult to underestimate the emperor's gesture. And yet, the boons did not end there. From the account of the mentioned Ademar of Chabannes we find out that Boleslav Chrobry also received other investitures from the emperor. After opening the grave of the great Frankish ruler in Aachen, the emperor presented the Polish ruler with the throne of Charles the Great himself.<sup>379</sup> The fact is very difficult to interpret due to the lack of any analogies; however, the general intention of dignifying the Polish duke seems fairly obvious.

A vast majority of researchers studying the problem are convinced that it was through the influence of Otto III that, around the year 1000, the

<sup>375</sup> Josef Hörle, "Die sogenannte 'Beschreibung der hl. Lanze' bei Liudprand von Cremona", *Archiv für Mittelrheinische Kirchengeschichte* 14 (1962), 63–80.

<sup>376</sup> Adelson, "The Holy Lance and", pp. 177–192.

<sup>377</sup> McKitterick, *History and Memory*, pp. 245–264; also: McCormick, *Eternal victory*, p. 371ff.

<sup>378</sup> Hermann Fillitz, "Reale und fiktive Insignien als Symbole kaiserlicher Romherrschaft", in *Rom im hohen Mittelalter: Studien zu den Romvorstellungen und zur Rompolitik vom 10. bis zum 12. Jahrhundert*. Reinhard Elze zur Vollendung seines siebenzigsten Lebensjahres gewidmet, eds. Bernd Schimmelpfennig, Ludwig Schmugge (Sigmaringen, 1992), pp. 5–12.

<sup>379</sup> *Ademari Cabannensis Chronicon*, p. 154, (3, 31); Falkenstein, *Otto III. und Aachen*, p. 160ff.; Knut Görich, *Otto III. öffnet das Karlsgrab in Aachen. Überlegungen zu Heiligenverehrung, Heiligsprechung und Traditionsbildung, in Herrschaftsrepräsentation im ottonischen*, pp. 381–430, p. 406ff.; Eickhoff, *Kaiser Otto III.*, p. 190ff., 274ff.; Gabriele Matthew, "Otto III, Charlemagne, and Pentecost A.D. 1000: A Reconsideration Using Diplomatic Evidence", in *The Year 1000. Religious*, pp. 111–133; about the significance of the throne: Horst Appuhn, "Beiträge zur Geschichte des Herrschersitzes im Mittelalter", *Aachener Kunstblätter* 54/55 (1986–87), 69–98; Hartmut Hoffman, "Die Krone im hochmittelalterlichen Staatsdenken", in *Festschrift für Harald Keller zum sechzigsten Geburtstag dargebracht von seinen Schülern*, Darmstadt 1963, pp. 71–85, p. 71.



marriage between Mieszko II and the daughter of count palatine Ezzo Erenfried, Richeza, was arranged. The matrimony was of invaluable significance to the strengthening of the Piast dynasty's position, after all the mother of the bride to be was Mathilda, sister to emperor Otto III and, as was commonly believed, heiress to the Carolingian bloodline.<sup>380</sup>

Evidence of the acceptance of the Carolingian ideology advocated by Otto III in Poland, can be found for instance in the fact that around the year 1016, Richeza's son Casimir was given a second name to commemorate the great emperor of the Franks—Charles.<sup>381</sup>

A glance at the long list of boons received from the emperor is sufficient to appreciate the extent of Otto III's interest in the ideological strengthening of the Polish ruler's position.<sup>382</sup> On the other hand, however, we will realise how strong the opposition from a part of the German elites must have been, since such extreme measures were required to empower the Piast who was literally almost covered in items signifying a relation with the Frankish monarchy.

The emperor's actions have received various interpretations throughout the years. Some German researchers have gone as far as accuse the monarch of political naivety, although comments such as these did little more than discredit their authors.<sup>383</sup> It is very difficult today—particularly in the course of these deliberations whose focus, after all, lies elsewhere—to fathom the complexities of the emperor's plans towards the Boleslav Chrobry's Poland.<sup>384</sup> What remains most significant is the fact that as a result of Otto III's efforts, the Polish ruler had at his disposal—if we accept the accounts claiming he

<sup>380</sup> Schreiner, *Królowa Rycheza, Polska*.

<sup>381</sup> The fact that there is a single reference to this in the work by Gallus Anonymous does not prove insignificance of this issue in the early 11th century. The chronicler conveyed the dynastic tradition and none of his reports were accidental. The exceptional character of this information testifies to the fact that in the Poland at the turn of the 11th century there was little understanding to the meaning of the second name of Casimir the Restorer. However, we have to bear it in mind that the country of the Piasts had gone beyond the sphere of civilization which was fascinated with the Carolingian tradition—see: Hertel, *Imiennictwo dynastii piastowskiej*, p. 121f.; also: Stanisław Kętrzyński, “Karol Wielki i Bolesław Chrobry”, *KH* 36 (1946), 19–25.

<sup>382</sup> The meaning of the imperial action unclear: Erdmann, *Forschungen zur politischen Ideenwelt*, p. 99ff.; Tomasz Jasiński, “Tytulatura Bolesława Chrobrego na zjeździe gnieźnieńskim”, in *Memoriae amici et magistri*. *Studia historyczne poświęcone pamięci Prof. Wacława Korty: 1919–1999* (Wrocław, 2001), pp. 23–31.

<sup>383</sup> See: Gerd Althoff, *Die Deutschen und ihr Mittelalter*, p. 147ff.

<sup>384</sup> Heinrich Dormeier, “Die *Renovatio Imperii Romanorum* und die ‘Außenpolitik’ Ottos III. und seiner Berater”, in *Polen und Deutschland*, pp. 163–191; Benjamin Arnold, “Eschatological Imagination and the Program of Roman Imperial and Ecclesiastical Renewal at the End of the Tenth Century”, in *The Apocalyptic Year 1000*, pp. 271–287.

received the crown in 1000—the primary set of objects believed to constitute royal insignia.<sup>385</sup>

The idea of coronation became a key element of Boleslav Chrobry's political agenda. We know that both he and his son performed a number of gestures correlating to the standards of crowned Christian monarchs of the day. The problem is that those specific theatrics had few remaining spectators willing to whiten them. The possession and proper use of symbolic items, as well as employing them in the performance of specific roles, must be directed at audiences aware of the significance of the particular items and gestures. In 9th century Poland, the number of people who could correctly understand the messages evoked by the ceremony of coronation and the monarchical rites numbered possibly a dozen or so.<sup>386</sup> Of course, each would have been a person of high standing and for them, the royal spectacle would have carried great significance. However, in a semi-pagan country that Poland was in those days, considering the contemporary mechanisms of political power, none of it had any practical value whatsoever. It is hardly possible that Boleslav Chrobry and his son, both experienced and skilful political players, would have been infantile enough to engage in such an elaborate spectacle in front of a virtually nonexistent audience. Logically, the messages signified by their royal gestures were intended for external, mainly German observers.

The debate over the Piasts' royal status was inspired by Otto III, and was certainly an element of his plans for the future of the empire. Poland was merely a part of a broader scheme which, apart from Hungary, also, as is often suggested nowadays, involved Venice.<sup>387</sup> The particulars of the emperor's intentions remain somewhat vague, and this is possibly why many researchers find them so fascinating. In recent writings, attempts have been made to argue that Otto III aimed to tie the rulers of peripheral lands of western

<sup>385</sup> More on this set: Staats, *Theologie der Reichskrone*; Éva Kovács, Zsuzsa Lovag, *The Hungarian Crown and Other Regalia* (Gyoma, 1980); also: Zbigniew Dalewski, "Die Heilige Lanze und die polnischen Insignien", in *Europas Mitte um 1000*, pp. 907–911.

<sup>386</sup> The progress of Christianization of the country was then not impressive—see: Zofia Kurnatowska, "Stan chrystianizacji Polski w czasach św. Wojciecha (w świetle źródeł archeologicznych)", in *Tropami Świętego Wojciecha*, pp. 7–110; and: Helena Zoll-Adamikowa, "Postępy chrystianizacji Słowian przed rokiem 1000 (na podstawie źródeł nekropolicznych)", in *Święty Wojciech i jego czasy. Materiały III Symposium Historyczno-Archeologicznego Polskiego Uniwersytetu na Obczyźnie Saint-Maurice, 12–13 kwietnia 1997 roku*, ed. Andrzej Źaki (Kraków, 2000), pp. 103–109.

<sup>387</sup> Giese, "Venedig-Politik und", pp. 219–243; see also: Hertel, *Imiennictwo dynastii piastowskiej*, p. 111; Arnold Angenendt, "Mission zwischen Ost und West", in *Millenium Russiae Christianae. Tausend Jahre Christliches Russland 988–1988*, ed. Gerhard Birkfellner (Köl-Weimar-Wien, 1993), pp. 3–23, p. 19ff.

Christendom to his own domain simply with the view of being able to compete with Byzantium, both on political and ideological levels.<sup>388</sup> Indeed, a number of texts dating back to the turn of the 10th and 11th c. suggest that the political German elites displayed a certain inclination to compete with the Eastern Empire.<sup>389</sup> Ultimately, however, the question as such bears little significance in the context of our deliberations, although it could shed some light on the possible motives behind Otto III's efforts aimed at the creation of kings in the domains confederated with the western empire.

We cannot know the extent to which the emperor's actions were inspired by the practices of Charles the Great and other Frankish dynasts who anointed their offspring as kings and emperors without papal assent. It is a known fact that Otto III did not accept the political independence of the bishops of Rome. Notably, the emperor rejected the majority of decrees included in the so called *Donation of Constantine*.<sup>390</sup> In this context, challenging the papacy's prerogatives in the sphere of anointing new kings is a fairly obvious conclusion. The same supports the authenticity of Thietmar's claim that it was the emperor and not the pope that presented the crown to Stephen I of Hungary.<sup>391</sup> Also in the case of Boleslav Chrobry, the tradition relating the events in Gniezno to the eventual coronation of the Polish duke becomes more viable in the context mentioned above. At the same time, however, it is rather surprising that despite the evident claims made in source texts, under Henry II's rule no outside powers seemed to recognise Boleslav as a crowned ruler. Even more importantly, the Piast himself seemed to share this view as evidenced by his efforts to secure the crown from the papacy.<sup>392</sup>

Regardless of the various nuances of the issue in question, even despite the incomplete rite of royal ascent, the position intended for the Piast ruler in the new imperial structures devised by Otto III was undoubtedly very high. It is therefore hardly surprising that the emperor's plans met with an avid response and eager cooperation of the Piast. The idea of elevating the Polish ruler's status was accepted by a certain part of Saxon elites, as documented

<sup>388</sup> Shepard, "Otto III Boleslav Chrobry", pp. 27–48; see also: Johannes Imscher, "Otto III. und Byzanz", in *Byzanz und das Abendland im 10. und 11. Jahrhundert*, ed. Evangelos Konstantinou (Köln-Weimar-Wien, 1997), pp. 207–229.

<sup>389</sup> Maciej Salamon, "Boleslav the Valiant and Byzantium", *Byzantinoslavica* 44 (1993), 114–120; see also: Jonathan Shepard, "Courts in East and West", in *The Medieval World*, pp. 14–36; and: Poppe, "Spuścizna po Włodzimierzu", p. 17f.

<sup>390</sup> Hans Henning, "*Gerbertus qui et Silvester*. Papsttum um die Jahrtausendwende", *DA* 55 (1999), 29–62, p. 53ff.; see also: Robert Folz, *L'Idée d'Empire en occident du V<sup>e</sup> au XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1953), p. 73ff.

<sup>391</sup> Váczy, "Thietmar von Merseburg über".

<sup>392</sup> *Petri Damiani Vita*, p. 62, (c. 28).

by Thietmar in his remarks about the counts of Lausitz who recognised Boleslav Chrobry's authority and swore oaths of fealty to him. We cannot doubt that in this instance, the Piast's authority could only have been that of an imperial dignitary. At the same time, however, it seems that the majority of east German nobles stood in opposition to Otto III's policies. The contestants of the Roman design of the state were even joined by Brun of Querfurt, a long-time friend and confidant of the young emperor and a sympathiser of Boleslav Chrobry. Despite all his sentiment, however, he was somewhat reserved towards the emancipation of the Polish Church and the related strengthening of the Piast position in relation to German nobility.<sup>393</sup>

After Otto III's death, the Polish ruler found himself in a rather dubious position as his status remained undefined. Although he could boast nearly all powers of a king, the process of his coronation was still not finalised. The Piast must have realised that for those German aristocrats who remained neutral, and even for his open sympathisers, it would have been difficult to accept the notion of a Slav, whose father was born a pagan, wearing a crown and wielding all the accessories of royal authority, which—in their opinion—had been exclusively rooted in their own heritage and cultural traditions.<sup>394</sup>

Even the matter of establishing an archdiocese seems to have been contested at times.<sup>395</sup> In the new political reality in the reign of Henry II, there could be no assent to the Piast ruler's insistent efforts towards the fulfilment of Otto III's ideological policies. Especially since an alliance with Germany had been the basis of Piast politics for many years. The new emperor's eastern policy most likely would not have been dictated by some innate aversion towards Boleslav Chrobry; it was simply due to the fact that after 1002, the nature of Henry II's alliances with particular German magnates tied him to the elite circles strongly opposing the Piast. Furthermore, the new lord of

<sup>393</sup> Wenskus, *Studien zur historisch*; Görich, *Otto III. Romanus Saxonicus*, p. 45ff.; see also: Jens Schneider, "Heinrich und Otto. Eine Begegnung an der Jahrtausendwende", *AfK* 84 (2002), 1–40, p. 29ff.

<sup>394</sup> It was not until some later time, when the idea of the sovereignty of the state was born, that some opinions which repudiated in general the rights of the Piasts for independence from Germany—see: *Lamperti Monachi Hersfeldensis*, p. 394 (a. 1077): *Dux Polenorum, qui per multos iam annos regibus Teutonicis tributarius fuerat, cuiusque regnum iam olim Teutonicorum virtute subactum atque in provinciam redactum fuerat [...] regiam dignitatem regiumque nomen sibi usurpavit, diadema imposuit atque ipso die natalis Domini a XV episcopis in regem est consecratus*; see also: Wolfgang Eggert, "Regna, partes regni, provinciae, ducatus. Bemerkungen zu Reichbenennungen und—auffassungen in 'deutschen' Geschichtswerken des 10. und 11. Jahrhunderts", *MIÖG* 104 (1996), 237–251; Wattenbach, Holtzmann, *Deutschlands Geschichtsquellen*, vol. 2, p. 456ff.; and: Müller-Martens, 'Regnum Theutonicum'. *Aufkommen*, p. 230f., 242.

<sup>395</sup> Fried, *Otto III. und Bolesław*, p. 81ff.

the empire was determined to rule with an iron fist over all lands under his influence, including those of Piast Poland. Was there a place in this scheme for Polish autonomy and a crowned Piast ruler—as was evidently Otto III's intention?

The example of Hungary, where after the deposition of Samuel Aba, Henry III retrieved in 1044 the spear once gifted to Stephen I, and the crown of Hungarian kings was sent to Rome along with other royal insignia, clearly demonstrates that the evolution of German politics aimed at retaining exclusive rights to the tradition of Carolingian kinhood rather than sharing it with other east European rulers.<sup>396</sup>

The processes of centralisation of power initiated by Henry II and continued by his successors resulted in strengthening the state and its position, and was clearly aimed at the establishment of a universal monarchy, but—at least in respect to central European states—based on slightly different principles than those stipulated under Otto III.

In the new reality, where German perception had changed enough to consider even the Hungarian king as unworthy of the title, a “barbarian” without any rights to the crown,<sup>397</sup> the Piast coronations of 1025, performed undoubtedly without any form of papal assent, must have seemed an evident act of usurpation, violation of sacred rules, almost sacrilegious. The quoted passages of chronicles and annals written in Germany at the time simply expressed these popular sentiments.

Most importantly, however, it was also a period when the general perception of Polish rulers, and in consequence the country as a whole, underwent a radical shift towards the negative. The old mental civilisational boundary resurfaced in common awareness, in general matching the tradition of the Carolingian *limes*, and as such it became solidified. Outside these borders, observers would once more see little more than barbarism and lawlessness, areas where the emperor could, even ought to enforce his justice, as long as the administrative matters of his own territories allowed it.

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<sup>396</sup> Györffy, “Die *corona sancti Stephani*”, pp. 55–63; Tadeusz Wasilewski, “La couronne royale—symbole de dépendance à l'époque du haut Moyen Âge. Les deux couronnements de Boleslas le Vaillant prince de Pologne”, in *La Pologne au XV<sup>e</sup> Congrès international des sciences historiques à Bucarest*, ed. Stanisław Bylina (Wrocław, 1980), pp. 25–50.

<sup>397</sup> The term ‘barbarians’ survived in the works by the German chroniclers of the 11th century to name Central European peoples—see e.g.: *Lamperti Monachi Hersfeldensis*, p. 394, a. 1077, it should not be associated with a ‘German’ nationalism, but with the validity of the structures of the anthropological geography, which were discussed in the first chapter of this work—see also: Dümmler, “Barbari und Teutonici”, pp. 557–564.

In a sense, history seemed to have made a full circle. The onset for German understanding of the Piast lands was a vision of the untamed, savage north, a concept naturally influencing the perception of the people and their states in a decisively negative way. Later, the archetypical “rose-colored spectacles” were substituted by the enthusiasm of Christianisation and contentment in the political cooperation of the Ottonian period. Eventually, however, as the general situation shifted and Piast allies were suddenly less useful, even troublesome with their excessive demands—the territory of Poland once more found itself in the dark part of Europe, outside the authority of the emperors. Admittedly, not everything was the same: the lands were no longer pagan, and as such the designation “barbarians”—although used at times—could no longer be commonly accepted. Still, a certain perception of the Piast lands solidified and survived almost to the present time,<sup>398</sup> as for certain German and generally west European observers, the country was permanently designated to belong to the worse part of *christianitas*, a land of lesser civilisation, somewhat wild, cold and inhabited by peoples cherishing strange and unfamiliar customs.

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<sup>398</sup> It did not always happen that the views based on old stereotypes were hostile to the Slavs, the theses by Johann Gotfried Herder can serve as an example—see: Peter Drews, *Herder und die Slaven—Materialen zur Wirkungsgeschichte bis zur Mitte des 19. Jahrhunderts* (München, 1990), p. 11ff. The complex of Poland ‘falling behind Europe’, or Poland ‘chasing’ Europe is certainly rooted in the Middle Ages. The problem is easily noticeable in contemporary Polish journalism and the reflection of intellectuals—this question is discussed by: Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, “The Complex of an Unwanted Child: The Meaning of Europe in Polish Discourse”, in *The Meaning of Europe*, eds. Michael Malborg, Bo Stråth (Oxford – New, York, 2002), pp. 215–242.



## CONCLUSION

This study has concentrated on the image of Poland and its rulers which was created by German sources in the earliest period of the existence of the Piast state (963–1034). One of the prime goals of this work was to identify the cultural and political context of such remarks and opinions. Another important target set by the author of this book was to attain information which illustrated actions taken by Mieszko I, Boleslav Chrobry, and Mieszko II, who aimed to create a certain image of themselves in Germany—their most significant political partner.

The very first reference in sources pertaining to the Polish rulers and their country comes from around 963, so it is only three years older than the baptism of Poland. Its author, Widukind of Corvey, called Mieszko I's subjects 'barbarians', and he applied the same term to other Slavic tribes who inhabited the region. Another text, whose origin dates back to the pagan period in the history of Poland—known as the Account by Ibrahim ibn Yacub addressed the Piast ruler as the king of the North. These two expressions bear a close resemblance and come from an old, ancient way of perceiving the geography of hardly explored areas of the Continent, which were termed the 'northern'.

In the Western Europe of the earlier Middle Ages this was the way intellectuals indicated in their texts an external, as though outside the Continent and civilization, location of not only Scandinavia, but also Slavic countries. This was practised irrespective of their real location in relation to the observer. In the case of the so called Account by Ibrahim ibn Yacub we are facing the adoption of this manner, which must have taken place during the traveller's visit to Germany.

The problem did not only boil down to the matter of nomenclature. The stereotype, which was present in the Mediterranean culture and was adopted by Christian authors, associated the regions of what was known as the North—which was later identified with the Slavic territories only—with those features which shaped the views of the elites of the West for many centuries.

Among the most important properties ascribed to those areas, apart from the obvious cold weather, was their certain primeval nature of land and its simultaneous abundance of crops and people, the wildness of the inhabitants and their vulnerability to becoming subjugated as they were devoid of the



ability to maintain any political order, or in general a civilizational one. The consequences of these views were very serious for the inhabitants of Central Europe as they legitimized, or even provoked aspirations for invading them, often in the name of the civilizing mission, or at least for demanding a control or tribute, allegedly due to the representatives of the communities which played a leading cultural role.

Certainly, the Polish elites, when adopted Christianity linking them with the civilization of the Latin West, cannot have realized the whole plethora of associations and ideological connections referring to them and their homeland. Some of these prejudices were of course known to them. The line-up of powers in the region of the day induced the integration of the Piasts' power with the empire of the Liudolfings. This accession was beneficial for the state. The question remained as for the details of such a process. The facts indicate that Mieszko I was aware of the fact that if he wanted to act efficiently as a ruler, or at least an aristocrat in a new surrounding, he would have to cover over the impression of alienation and barbarism that his homeland made. He made such attempts by adopting certain accessories and manifesting conducts which were typical of the representatives of the social group he wanted to be identified with.

The Liudolfings tried to maintain control over the vast territory of their state via different measures. One of the most significant means—as far as the secular aristocracy is concerned—linking the monarch and aristocrats was the arrangement known as *amicitia*, namely the institutionalized friendship. Thanks to such *amicitia*, mentioned by Widukind (in 967), which occurred between Mieszko I and emperor Otto I, the Polish ruler achieved in the eyes of the chronicler of Corvey a high position in the regional hierarchy of power. This belies the biased accounts by chronicler Thietmar concerning a low, tributary status of the Piast in relation to the power of the emperor.

The titles and other expressions used to describe Mieszko I's status show his promotion in the eyes of German observers. Mieszko originally appears as a hardly known 'duke of the Wandals', as he was referred to in the Miracles of St. Ulrich of Augsburg around 985, who lived on the periphery of the western civilization if not outside of it, only to become 'one of the dukes of Europe', which is the title he gets from the author of the Annals of Quedlinburg in 991.

Those attitudes changed because of some favourable political circumstances, and in particular due to a threat posed by a very powerful Federation of the Lutizi after the victorious uprising of the Baltic Slavs in 983. All those events contributed to the fact that the elite of the empire decided to appreciate and fully invest in their precious Piast ally (the emperor's relative and a margrave's daughter, Oda, as his wife).

Besides, he himself did a lot to be culturally accepted by his political partners. Thus he generously presented with gifts, which was customary among the aristocracy, a few cult centres of Germany. Thanks to this, on the day of Mieszko I's death his name could be recorded in the oldest and most respected German monastery in Fulda with the Frankish titles *comes* and *marchio* before it, which in a way 'accustomed' people to the name and person of this Slav.

In the early years of Boleslav Chrobry's rule a certain crisis occurred in the mutual Polish—German relations. One of its signs was a document for the bishopric of Meissen, issued in December 995, which was an obvious slight to the territorial power of the Piasts in Lower Silesia. The reason for this friction must have been that fact that Boleslav Chrobry had expelled the margrave's daughter, Oda, together with her children, from Poland, which happened most probably in the autumn of the same year of 995. At that time a certain demotion of the status of the Polish state in the political hierarchy of the region took place. A direct relationship with the emperor was replaced with the *amicitia* between Boleslav Chrobry and the margrave of Meissen, Ekkehard, who was pushed through by Otto III to become the main representative and organizer of the power of the empire in Central Europe. This change was not dramatic. The arrangement of *amicitia* was considered as honorary, and the status of the Piast ruler was significantly different, which was even emphasised by Thietmar, who had an unfriendly attitude towards Chrobry, from the inferior status of the Bohemian dukes of the day, who remained tributaries, not even to the emperor, but to margrave Ekkehard.

The Piasts and the Liudolfings had the same enemy—the pagan Federation of the Lutizi. In this situation the martyrdom of St. Adalbert, whose life fascinated the pious emperor, helped to restore the alliance. Otto III went on a pilgrimage to his grave and the centre of his arising cult in Gniezno. The new saint was supposed to become one of patron saints of the *Imperium Christianum*, transformed and enlarged by the territory of Central Europe. Raising the status of his ally, the emperor established a Church archbishopric in Poland and intended to make Boleslav Chrobry king in order to link him even further with his state.

At this stage our analysis showed that German observers took very little interest in the Gniezno events, which was practically limited to religious matters. This indicates their disapproval of the whole issue. It was only Thietmar who in his laconically worded comment directed at Otto III as a reproach that the latter 'had made a tributary a lord', mentioned the concessions to Boleslav Chrobry. The chronicler was not honest in his acclamation because this ruler—as the analysis of the accounts by this author shows—had never paid any tribute to the empire, providing it with his military service. The gap

in written sources is filled with the iconography of the books written in the circle close to the emperor's court towards the end of Otto III's rule or in the early days of his successor. The miniatures, showing the emperor on the throne and four personified countries, including *Sclavinia*—the Slavic territory, make us realize that the authors of this iconographic programme of these compositions wanted to perceive the country of the Slavs as confederated with the empire on the grounds similar to e.g. *Germania* or *Italia*.

It is important and interesting that roughly at the same time, when Otto III tried to carry out his universal concepts, the first records of the name of Boleslav Chrobry's country in the form of 'Polonia' and 'Polenia' appeared in written sources. This correlation prompts the assumptions that there was a genetic relation between these two phenomena. The verification of sources and the review of comparative material lead to the conclusion that the term 'Poland' is of vernacular origin and did not originate from Christianity, but from the view shared by a number of peoples that they themselves and their land were 'truly' civilized, better than others. The chronology of the appearance of the name can be explained, on the one hand, by the fact that the country was better recognized and, on the other hand, that there was a need to distinguish between this country and the pagan Baltic Slavs, who were then the main political adversaries of the Piast state and the empire.

We can identify two extremely different opinions on the Polish ruler among the German elites. The one was expressed by a Saxon missionary and a religious activist, Brun of Querfurt, in his works, who showed the Piast in an unambiguously positive way. The opposite description is to be found in the chronicle by Thietmar of Merseburg.

The most important for the former Saxon commentator was the fact that Boleslav was a deeply religious person, who engaged himself in the work of bringing Christianity to others. His extraordinary contribution appreciated by the empire was that he provided it with his armed forces and coerced some pagans, especially the Baltic ones, into converting to Christianity and accepting the German supremacy, together with the tribute.

On the other hand, the chronicler of Merseburg regarded the Polish ruler as a truly indecent man and a virulent enemy, who, instead of subordinating himself to the authority of the German ruler and his notables, plots against him and makes attempts to condescend towards others irrespective of his inherent status. According to Thietmar, the Piasts should be obedient and pay a tribute to the Germans. However, we do not notice in this opinion expressed by the chronicler (unlike the authors of some older historical studies) that it originated from nationalism or *quasi* racial prejudices. In our opinion, it was prompted by a certain view of the world and his-

tory which came into being already in the Carolingian epoch. In fact this view was also shared by Brun of Querfurt. Both commentators believed in a special mission of the Saxon empire, which was assigned by Heaven, to lead the Christian world. The difference between those two was that the former represented this group of German ideologists who wanted this idea to go beyond the sphere of its own ethnos and to be shared with other—still subordinated to the empire—peoples, whereas the latter only expressed his exclusive views.

The review and analysis of the reports devoted to the convention held in Merseburg in July 1002 make us believe that the assassination attempt on the Polish monarch, which was carried out when the Polish retinue was leaving the town, was a consequence of a certain ritual and ceremonial rivalry between the old 'Ottonian' elites of the empire, and the people who were just becoming powerful thanks to the support of Henry II. The meaning of the whole convention from the point of view of Polish—German relations should be interpreted as the Polish ruler's ceremonial throwing out of the elites which cooperated with the German ruler. The military conflict, which was provoked by this incident, was a fight for prestige and position of the Piasts in the political hierarchy of the region. This was not a war for independence, unlike the authors of some older historical studies claimed.

We notice the above mentioned dichotomy in the opinions on the Polish rulers (Brun of Querfurt—Thietmar of Merseburg), as well as some different attitudes towards them shown by a range of political elites of the empire, also in the sources which describe how Mieszko II was perceived. What is interesting, Thietmar, known for his hostile attitude towards Chrobry, adopted quite a positive approach towards his adversary's son. Thus in his view the Piast's son was a man of manners, aware of the rank of the ruler of the empire, who possessed some close friends in Germany and was himself loyal to them. It seems that the chronicler pinned his hopes upon Mieszko as regards better relations with the country of the Piasts. We can only speculate, due to the ambiguity of sources about this particular problem, why Thietmar adopted such a stance. It is likely that, according to the chronicler, it was the background of Mieszko's mother, who was a relative of Saxon aristocrats, which made her son, having some of the 'blood' of the German aristocracy in his veins and being additionally married to Richeza—a relative of the emperors, become successfully 'civilized' by these connections.

A really splendid presentation of Mieszko II is brought by what was known as the *Letter of Mathilda*, which was in fact a dedication of the duchess of Lotharingia attached to a liturgical codex which was supposed to be a gift for the Piast monarch, crowned in 1025. The Polish king, in the light of this

codex, including the miniature placed in the book and the nature of the present, appeared to be a monarch typical of the post-Carolingian cultural circle, similar to the rulers of Germany, or France. Such views were probably produced by West German lords, who founded the codex. These people formed a political opposition to Conrad II, who ruled the country at that time.

The aversion of the founders of the book to their monarch is reflected by a certain strain of the *Letter of Mathilda*. Here a comparison is made between the Polish ruler and St. Sebastian (a classic Roman martyr who was oppressed by the emperor) and the author emphatically supports the Polish monarch, who was defending his position in his dispute with the German monarch.

Other expressions found in the *Letter*, including the allusions of the remaining texts in the book, show the place which the promoters of the gift anticipated within the structure of power in the Christian world. The king of Poland, apart from being a protector and organizer of religious life in his country (*Cultor Dei*), just like other monarchs, was supposed to be, in their view, a commander of the *Imperium Christianum*, an armed aide of the emperor in his work of converting pagans and in the defence of Christian faith.

This motif clearly links the authors of the ideological programme included in the Codex of Mathilda to the tradition of the Ottoman times, when an armed alliance existed of the Piasts with the Liudolfings, directed against the pagan Lutizi. Perhaps, but we do not know how, it was the family of Richeza, Mieszko II's wife, who inspired the author of the gift from Mathilda to shape its content as such. After all, it is known that Ezzo's daughter was very attached to a royal title, whose significance was zealously propagated by the codex. She used it till the end of her life (d. 1063), even though she stayed in Germany and outlived the fall of her kingdom by a few decades. Both the indicated circumstances and others provoke the assumptions that the Piast coronations of 1025 were in fact, apart from their obvious ideological and religious nature, important as prestigious and family events. They were interpreted by historians in a number of ways, but always viewed from the legal and political position.

In most opinions which were formed in Germany and concerned the Polish rulers the Piasts were reproached for acting against the authority of the empire. There were also views whose authors called this deed nothing but usurpation. They were based on the fact that Boleslav Chrobry, taking advantage of the weakening of the empire after the death of Henry II, decided to be crowned without anybody's consent. This act was a logical supplementation of his status of power which the Polish ruler had received from Otto III—yet the emperor's premature death had prevented the coronation. Considering

the sheer tradition in this matter, such an act could be understood as usurpation. Ideologists of power on the territory of the former Frankish state and its succession monarchies explicitly indicated the exclusive position of the king, who not only had the crown but was also anointed. His role as the chosen by God was also emphasised, as well as his mission associated with the rank of such a ruler. Stress was put on a special nature of the blood of the Carolingians, which gave the royal entitlements. The whole order of the world, almost the cosmic one, was associated with the ideology of power of the anointed ruler, who temporarily substituted for Christ in the worldly kingdom. When the news on the coronations of the Piasts reached Germany its monarch was believed to be a successor of the Carolingians, who was regarded as the guardian of this tradition. No wonder that Conrad II felt offended and disrespected, or even thought that the law had been broken.

Two extremely different views on the political 'development' of Central Europe, existing in German opinions on royal coronations of the Polish rulers collided again—just like in the case of different views of Brun of Querfurt and Thietmar which concerned Boleslav Chrobry.

The problem was that the Piasts, attached to the conception which finally failed in the empire, without sufficient military and political potential, exposed themselves to the danger of being marginalized, also in a cultural sense. The first signs of such a process were drastic opinions by the Annalist of Hildesheim on Mieszko II. There both the king and his people were compared with the Devil's servants. This view perfectly suited the dichotomised perception of the world, as the German ruler—the Piast's adversary—became naturally the supporter of God. Thus the old stereotype was revived in the views of the elites of the German state and the mental and ideological border, which divided the Continent, was built. At that time it was not pagan tribes anymore that lived on the evil side but worse Christians.

This notion turned out to be surprisingly long-lasting. Even the author of the *Fundatio monasterii brunwilarensis*, who worked in the circles of West German aristocracy, once sympathizing with the Piasts, wrote in the second half of the 11th century—without giving any details, that queen Richeza found the conduct of her subjects offensive. This remark did not raise any particular suspicion among modern scholars, or even contemporary ones, and it was taken for granted. And the attitude as such indeed proves the power of the stereotype of otherness, or even a genetic deficiency of the inhabitants of Central Europe, and Poland in particular, in terms of culture and civilization.



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## INDEX<sup>1</sup>

- Adalbero II, bishop of Verdun 89  
Adalbero, nephew of bishop Ulrich of  
Augsburg 80  
Adalbert (Pol.: Wojciech), bishop of Prague  
18, 32, 116–117, 120, 126, 130–132, 134,  
139–140, 143, 145, 149–151, 159, 161,  
245, 270–271, 301, 325  
Adalbert, archbishop of Magdeburg 18  
Adalbold, bishop of Utrecht 121, 184–185,  
187, 189–191, 199–200, 207, 227  
Adaldag; archbishop of Hamburg-Brema  
89  
Adam of Bremen, chronicler 33–35  
Adelheid, abbess of Quedlinburg, sister of  
Otto III 76, 112, 126–127, 146, 201–202,  
214  
Adelheid, empress 127–128  
Ademar of Chabannes, chronicler 314–315  
Adrian II, pope 251  
Al-Bekri, Andalusian-Arab geographer and  
historian 19  
Al-Hakam II, caliph of Cordoba 15  
Al-Himyarī, Arab geographer 18–19  
Al-Qazwīnī, Persian scholar 15, 19  
Ambrose, saint a. bishop of Milan 268  
Andrew, saint 90  
Ansgar, archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen  
26–27  
Arduin, count of Ivrea 172  
Aribo, archbishop of Mainz 282  
Arnaldus, knight of king Henry I 58  
Arnold of Lübeck, chronicler 4  
Arnulf, bishop of Halberstadt 200, 202,  
213  
Arnulf, duke of Bavaria 58–60, 96  
Augustine, saint 306  
  
Balderich, bishop of Speyer 89  
Balzo, bishop of Speyer 89  
Bathsheba, bibl. wife of David, king of  
Israel 252  
Benedict, monk of Meseritz 149, 151, 161  
Benedict V, pope 226  
Benno, son of count Siegrfried of  
Northeim 187, 203  
  
Bernard of Clairvaux, saint, church  
ideologist 50, 260  
Bernard of Handensleben, margrave of the  
Northern March 217  
Bernhar, bishop of Werden 226  
Bernhard, son of count Liuthar 218  
Bernhard I Billung (Bernard/Benno), duke  
of Saxony 76, 186, 192  
Bernhard II, duke of Saxony 35  
Berner, monk of Magdeburg 226  
Bernward, bishop of Hildesheim 81, 112,  
129, 185–186, 200, 202, 226  
Bertold, duke of Bavaria 96  
Bezeko, vassal of count Herman 205  
Billung, (fictional?) chieftain of the  
Abodrites 35  
Binizo (Bio), count of Merseburg 214–215  
Boleslav Chrobry (the Brave), duke a. king  
of Poland 7, 66–67, 73, 85, 92, 109–121,  
124–126, 128, 131, 133–135, 137–139,  
141–143, 145–152, 154–163, 166–169,  
173–175, 177–180, 182–184, 186–188,  
190–194, 196–197, 203–204, 206–208,  
210–213, 216–219, 222–224, 228,  
230–232, 234, 237–243, 245–250,  
253–254, 264, 272–273, 277, 283,  
287–289, 291–292, 294, 302, 312,  
314–319, 323, 325–326, 328–329  
Boleslav I, duke of Bohemia 42, 75  
Boleslav II, duke of Bohemia 75, 77–79,  
114, 122–123, 196, 214  
Boleslav III, duke of Bohemia 97, 121, 130,  
243–245  
Boleslav III Wrymouth, duke of Poland  
244  
Borivoj, Czech duke 29  
Brandhoh, abbot of Fulda 102–103  
Bretislav I, duke of Bohemia 245  
Brun, Saxon count (son of Ekkehard I of  
Meissen) 124  
Brun, Saxon count 227  
Brun, bishop of Werden 227  
Brun, bishop of Würzburg 283  
Brun of Querfurt, Saxon missionaries and  
Church activist 28, 110, 138, 144–145,

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<sup>1</sup> The index does not include authors of secondary literature.



- 148–150, 153–155, 157, 160–161, 171, 218, 220, 269, 276, 312, 319, 326–327, 329
- Burchard, bishop of Worms 175
- Burchard, count palatine 215
- Burchard I, duke of Swabia 58–59
- Burhard II, duke of Swabia 96
- Carolingian dynasty 2, 27, 29, 34, 38, 40, 57, 83, 87, 90, 92–93, 95, 98, 105, 113, 146, 174, 179, 259, 266, 272, 275, 300, 305–313, 328
- Casimir the Restorer (Kazimierz Odnowiciel), Polish duke 245, 316
- Charles the Bald, Frankish king a. emperor 258, 273
- Charles the Great (Charlemagne), Frankish king a. emperor 44, 56–57, 93–94, 176, 199, 251, 277, 300, 305–308, 310–312, 315, 318
- Clovis I, king of the Franks 55
- Conrad, canon of Magdeburg 226
- Conrad, duke of Carinthia 261
- Conrad, duke of Moravia, Bohemia 296
- Conrad, king of Burgundy 109
- Conrad, son of Mathilda of Lotharingia 281–282
- Conrad I, German king 57, 210, 311
- Conrad II, German king and emperor 223, 245, 261–262, 264, 269, 281–282, 284, 286–287, 289, 290–295, 299, 301, 328–329
- Conrad the Red (Cono), duke of Lotharingia 49, 195
- Cosmas of Prague, Czech chronicler 116, 179, 245, 268, 297
- Cunegunde, queen a. empress, Henry II's wife 190, 203
- Dalimil, Czech chronicler 29, 143
- David, bibl. king of Israel 252
- Dedi, count of Wettin 215, 217–218
- Dietrich, duke of Lotharingia 281, 284
- Dietrich, grandson of Mieszko I 293
- Dietrich, margrave of the Northern March (Nordmark) 35, 76, 98, 104, 218, 237
- Dietrich, son of count Dedi 217
- Diocletian, Roman emperor 268–269
- Dobrawa (Dąbrówka), duchess of Poland, wife of Mieszko I 29, 75, 163, 225, 280
- Dobromir, Slavic duke 125–126, 207–208, 226, 228–229, 246, 253
- Dodilo, bishop of Brandenburg 31
- Dudo of St Quentin, chronicler 46, 69, 190, 193, 195
- Eberhard, duke of Franconia 57–58, 60, 62
- Eckerich, Saxon aristocrat 250
- Edith, queen, wife of Otto I 79
- Eid, bishop of Meißen 117–118, 120, 168, 226, 242
- Eigil, Frankish hagiographer 27–28
- Einhard, Frankish biographer 46, 251, 265
- Egilbert, archbishop of Trier 296
- Ekbert, Saxon count 44–45
- Ekkehard I, margrave of Meissen 97, 120–123, 126, 188, 207, 238
- Ekkehard II, margrave of Meissen 213, 231
- Emma, queen of England 227
- Emnilde, duchess of Poland 125–126, 207, 224–226, 228–229, 231, 239, 246, 253
- Erkenbald, bishop of Strasburg 89
- Ernst II, duke of Swabia 282
- Erp, father of archbishop Walter of Magdeburg 227
- Esiko, count of Merseburg 185, 196, 213–216, 219, 222
- Ethelyn, wife of count Siegfried of Northeim 222
- Etich, bishop of Augsburg 78, 89
- Ezzo (Ehrenfried), count palatine of Rhineland 58, 235, 237, 282–284, 291, 316, 328
- Folkmar, bishop of Utrecht 89
- Frederick Barbarossa, emperor 298, 301
- Frederick, archbishop of Salzburg 89
- Frederick, bishop of Zeitz 89
- Frederick, count of Eilenburg 213, 215
- Frederick, count palatine 186
- Frederick, duke of Lotharingia 261, 281, 284
- Frederick II, emperor 246
- Friderun, nun 226
- Gallus Anonymous, Polish chronicler 32, 105, 134, 254, 314, 316
- Gaudentius, brother of St Adalbert, archbishop of Gniezno 130, 160
- Gebhard (Jaromir), bishop of Prague 178
- Gedeon, provost of Magdburg 226
- Gerald of Aurillac, saint 270
- Gerberga, daughter of king Henry I 59
- Gerbert of Aurillac (pope Sylvester II) 33, 89, 153–154, 172
- Gerdag, bishop of Hildesheim 89
- Gerhard, vicar of Augsburg 72, 74, 77–78, 80
- Gero, archbishop of Magdeburg 247

- Gero I, margrave 42, 45–46, 50, 61–62, 64, 74, 96–98, 106, 122, 126, 218
- Gero II, margrave 186, 200, 205, 207, 220, 228
- Gisela, sister of Henry II, queen of Hungary 228
- Gisela, empress, Conrad II's wife 281–282
- Giselbert, duke of Lotharingia 59–60
- Giselher, archbishop of Magdeburg 201, 221
- Gottschalk, bishop of Freising 226
- Goselo, duke of Lower Lotharingia 281
- Gregory V, pope 126
- Gumpold, bishop of Mantua 31–32
- Gunther, Saxon count 122–123
- Gunzelin, Saxon count 124, 188, 250
- Hadamar, abbot of Fulda 61
- Haicho, abbot of Fulda 88
- Hajek Vacláv, Czech chronicler 115
- Harald the Bluetooth, king of Denmark 34, 45
- Harold Godwinson, Anglo-Saxon earl 69
- Hatto II, abbot of Fulda 101
- Hatto III, abbot of Fulda 88, 101
- Helmold of Bosau, chronicler 1, 4, 26, 35–36, 47, 68–69, 73, 142, 298
- Henry, bishop of Augsburg 77, 80
- Henry, bishop of Würzburg 200, 227
- Henry, count of Kaltenburg 203
- Henry I, German king 44, 57–61, 66, 69, 79, 95–97, 121, 198, 212, 227, 233, 332
- Henry II, German king a. emperor 30, 39, 62, 70, 75, 85, 89, 91–92, 109, 120–122, 126, 128–129, 136–137, 150, 155–158, 162, 164, 167–171, 177–178, 182–185, 187–191, 194, 196–198, 203–204, 206–217, 219–220, 222, 224, 227–228, 232, 234–243, 245–248, 250, 259, 270–271, 276, 281, 286, 289, 292, 318–320, 327–328
- Henry III, German king a. emperor 245, 320
- Henry IV, German king a. emperor 296–297
- Henry the Quarrelsome (the Wrangler), duke of Bavaria 75–77, 79–80, 101–102, 122–123
- Henry III, Bavarian duke 89
- Henry V, Bavarian duke 200
- Henry of Schweinfurt, count 188–189, 192, 201, 203, 208–209
- Hepo, deacon of Magdeburg 226
- Herbert II, count of Vermandois 60
- Heribert, archbishop of Cologne 58, 199, 202, 209
- Heribert, count of Rhineland 89
- Herman, margrave of Meissen 197, 208, 211–213, 216, 218–219, 235
- Herman I, duke of Swabia 96
- Herman II, duke of Swabia 157, 199, 201, 203–204, 208–209, 261
- Herman Billung, duke of Saxony 12, 41–42, 44, 97, 123
- Hieronimus, bishop of Vicenza 135, 140
- Hildeward, bishop of Halbestadt 226
- Hincmar, archbishop of Reims 94
- Hodo, margrave of the Saxon Eastern March 65, 67, 69, 105, 227
- Hodo, Saxon aristocrat 247, 250
- Hugh, bishop of Würzburg 89
- Hugh, margrave of Tuscany 104, 106
- Ibn Sa'd, Arab scholar 18
- Ibrahim ibn Yaqub, Hispano-Arab traveller 11, 14, 16–20, 22–23, 25, 27, 36–37, 39, 323
- Irmingard, countness of Hammestein 181
- Jacob, saint 189
- Jacobus de Voragine, hagiographer 268
- Japhet, bibl. son of Noah 20
- Jaromir, Czech duke 236, 242–243
- John, monk of Meseritz 151, 161
- John, the Baptist, saint 258
- John of Gorze, saint 15
- John Scottus Eriugena, scholar 257
- Jaromir, bishop of Prague—see: Gebhard (Jaromir)
- Jaroslav the Wise, duke of Ruthenia 181, 287
- Joseph Flavius, Jewish historian 135
- Knut, ruler of the Abodrites 69
- Kristian, Czech hagiographer 29, 31, 33
- Kuchawiz, Slavic leader 50
- Lambert, son of Mieszko I 217
- Lampert of Hersfeld, chronicler 46, 319–320
- Landbert von Deutz, medieval biographer 200
- Lawrence, monk of Monte Cassino, archbishop of Amalfi 32
- Lawrence, saint 103
- Leo, bishop of Vercelli 128–129
- Liudolf, abbot of Corvey 226
- Liudolf, bishop of Augsburg 78, 80, 226

- Liudolf, son of Otto I 44, 79, 166, 252  
 Liudolfings (Ottonians), dynasty 6, 9, 10, 16, 57, 63, 66, 70–72, 75, 80, 84, 90, 92, 96, 98–99, 100, 104–105, 109, 111–112, 115, 119–121, 126, 128, 156, 171, 179, 199, 211, 214, 261, 301, 309, 311, 324, 325, 328  
 Liuthar, count of Walbeck 83, 119, 186, 200–201, 216, 218, 220–222, 235  
 Lothar III of Supplinburg, German king 195, 239, 244, 298  
 Louis the Child, Frankish king 97  
 Louis the Pious, Frankish king a. emperor 94, 174, 176
- Madai, bibl. son of Japhet 20  
 Magnus, Danish king 298  
 Mathilda, Abbes of Quedlinburg, daughter of Otto I 10, 43, 63, 112, 127, 227  
 Mathilda, cousin of the chronicler Thietmar, nun 227  
 Mathilda, daughter of margrave Ekkehard I 218  
 Mathilda, daughter of emperor Otto II 237  
 Mathilda, grandmother of Thietmar, chronicler 227  
 Mathilda, Lotaringian duchess, daughter of Herman II of Swabia 209, 254, 255, 258, 261, 261, 263–269, 271, 272–275, 276, 278–286, 316, 327, 328  
 Mathilda, queen, Henry's I wife 44, 227, 233, 252  
 Maurice, saint 81, 103, 155, 315, 317  
 Maximilian, Roman emperor 268  
 Mieszko, son of Mieszko I 217  
 Mieszko I, duke of Poland 6, 7, 10–14, 18–20, 22–25, 27, 31, 37–45, 49–51, 53, 60, 63–78, 81–84, 85–93, 98–106, 109, 111, 113–114, 119, 123, 128, 159, 163, 196, 214, 231, 217, 228, 230, 237, 305, 308, 323–325  
 Mieszko II, duke a. king of Poland 6, 7, 85, 223–228, 232–234, 236–239, 240, 245, 247–251, 252–288, 290–293, 302, 316, 323, 327, 327–329  
 Michael, Archangel 112, 146, 255, 256, 259, 260–262, 272, 290  
 Mistislav, duke of the Abodrites 228  
 Mistui, duke of the Abodrites 76  
 Mstivoy, duke of the Vinuli (Abodrites?) 35
- Nacco, duke of the Abodrites 16, 20, 21, 44  
 Niels, king of Denmark 69
- Oda, daughter of Dietrich, margrave of the Northern March 76, 81, 83, 103–104, 106, 114, 119, 163, 217, 219, 230, 237, 293, 324  
 Oda, daughter of Ekkehard I, margrave of Meißen 180, 238, 324  
 Odo, abbot of Cluny 270  
 Odilien, Polish mighty 110  
 Odilo, abbot of Cluny 154, 162, 179  
 Oldrich, duke of Bohemia 236, 239, 240–258, 242, 247, 287  
 Osdag, bishop of Hildesheim 89  
 Ottakar I (Premisl Ottokar I), king of Bohemia 246, 298  
 Ottakar II (Premisl Ottokar II), king of Bohemia 84  
 Otto, Boleslav's Chrobry son 238, 287–288  
 Otto, Carinthian duke 199, 209  
 Otto, count of Hammerstein 89, 181, 210  
 Otto I, emperor 10, 12, 15–18, 38, 42, 45, 49, 51, 53, 60, 63–64, 66, 69, 79–80, 96–98, 101, 105, 122, 198–199, 227, 252, 310, 312, 324  
 Otto II, emperor 28, 75–77, 80–82, 97, 101, 103, 105, 123, 198, 227, 237, 277, 279  
 Otto III, emperor 63, 75–76, 97, 101–103, 109, 112, 114–118, 126, 128, 130–140, 142, 151–152, 155, 157, 160–161, 165, 172, 179, 183, 195, 199–202, 210–211, 214–215, 218, 220–222, 237, 239, 243, 261–262, 271, 277–279, 285, 312–313, 320, 325–326, 328
- Paul, saint 272  
 Pepin the Short, Frankish king 305, 307, 313  
 Peter, bishop of Vercelli 172  
 Peter Damiani (Petrus Damiani), saint, mediaeval philosopher 152–153  
 Peter, saint 45, 106, 114, 159, 170, 180, 227, 240, 272  
 Piasts dynasty 5–7, 22–24, 32, 37, 39–40, 64, 67–68, 70–71, 75, 85, 91–92, 99, 104, 109–110, 112, 114, 118–119, 122, 124–128, 130–131, 138–139, 141–143, 146–147, 149–151, 160, 171, 180, 218, 221–224, 238, 246, 248, 286, 290, 294–295, 297, 303–304, 309, 314, 317, 324–329  
 Pilgrim, archbishop of Cologne 281  
 Pilgrim, bishop of Passau 89  
 Poppo, bishop of Utrecht 89  
 Predslava, daughter of Vladimir, duke of Kiev 181  
 Premislids dynasty 24, 71, 75, 78, 116, 118, 131, 299

- Prokui, allegedly the uncle of Stephen I of Hungary 228
- Przibiwój, Polish aristocrat 110
- Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite (Pseudo-Denys), Christian theologian a. philosopher 257
- Radim, see: Gaudentius
- Radlo-Atanase, tutor of St Adalbert 150
- Regelinde, daughter of Boleslav Chrobry 212
- Regino of Prüm, abbot a chronicler 252
- Reginold, bishop of Eichstätt 89
- Rether, bishop of Padernborn 202, 226
- Rheinbern, bishop of Kolobrzeg (Kolberg) 226
- Richart, abbot of Fulda 90
- Richeza, Polish queen 237–239, 253, 256, 282–283, 285, 287, 316, 327–329
- Rikbert, Saxon count 201
- Rikdag, margrave of Meissen 123
- Rimbert, archbishop of Hamburg 1, 26, 27
- Robert, papal *oblationarius* 131
- Robert II, French king 227
- Romuald, saint a. founder of the Camaldolese order 151–154
- Rudolf, Burgundian king 95
- Rudolf, Frankish king 60
- Rudolf Glaber, French historian 117, 179
- Salian, dynasty 6, 38, 57, 92, 269, 279, 281, 290–291, 295–296, 309–311
- Samuel Aba, Hungarian king 320
- Saxon Annalist, chronicler 292
- Sebastian, saint 267–272, 328
- Sicon, duke of Benevent 146
- Siegfried, bishop of Halbestadt 227
- Siegfried, count of Northeim 203
- Siegfried, son-in-law (brother-in-law?) of Henry I, German king 214
- Siegfried, son of count Siegfried of Northeim 203
- Siegfried, son of margrave Hodo 250
- Sobeslav, Czech duke 178, 195, 244
- Sobeslav, duke of the Slavník dynasty 116
- Sophia, abbess of Gandersheim, sister of Otto III 127, 201
- Spytihněv II, Czech duke 296
- Stephen I the Great, Hungarian king 298, 313–314, 318, 320
- Stoignew, duke of the Abodrites 44, 61
- Stoignew, Polish envoy 241
- Sturm, first abbot of Fulda, saint a. missionary 27, 28, 32
- Svatopluk, duke of Ruthenia 242
- Svatopluk, Great Moravian ruler 29
- Swanhild, wife of margrave Ekkehard I 123, 200
- Sweyn III, king of Denmark 298
- Tagino, archbishop of Magdeburg 213, 219, 226
- Tankmar, brother of Otto I 48
- Theganus (Thegan of Trier) Frankish writer 174, 177, 265
- Theophanu, empress 76, 85, 89, 102, 116, 123, 126, 214, 220
- Theuderic I, son of Clovis I, Frankish king 55
- Theotmar, archbishop of Salzburg 40
- Thiegdag, bishop of Prague 122
- Thietburg, sister of Bernhard of Haldensleben 218
- Thietmar, bishop of Osnabrück 226
- Thietmar, chronicler 1, 12, 30–33, 35, 46, 49, 50, 62–70, 76–77, 80–81, 85, 92, 97, 103–106, 110–117, 119–126, 128, 131–134, 136, 147–149, 154, 161–178, 180, 182, 184, 187–195, 197, 203–207, 211, 217–218, 220–211, 224–243, 247–254, 260, 280, 285, 292, 312–313, 318–319, 324–329
- Tugomir, duke of Stodorani, Otto I's father-in-law 229
- Udo, count of Katlenburg 203
- Ulrich, bishop of Augsburg, saint 72, 74–75, 77–82, 101, 103, 324
- Unger, vicar in Memleben, bishop of Poznań 81, 103, 132–133
- Unni, archbishop of Hamburg 33
- Vladimir I, the Great, duke of Ruthenia 156–157, 180, 234, 242
- Vladimir Monomach, duke of Ruthenia 266
- Vladislav II, Czech king 297, 301
- Vratislav II, Czech king 245–246, 296–297
- Volcold, bishop of Meißen 89
- Wagon (Wegon), bishop of Starigard/Oldenburg 35
- Walter, archbishop of Magdeburg 227
- Wenceslaus I, duke of Bohemia, saint 162, 270
- Werner /Werinar/, abbot of Fulda 80, 88, 101–103
- Werner, son of margrave Liuthar of Walbeck 216–218, 235, 237

- Wichman, elder, Saxon count 43  
 Wichman, younger, Saxon count 12–14,  
 41–51, 63–64, 73  
 Widukind, Saxon leader 44  
 Widukind of Corvey, chronicler 10–14, 18,  
 25, 27, 30, 34, 36, 38, 41, 42–67, 70–74,  
 157, 178, 190, 214, 240, 252, 308–312,  
 323, 324  
 Wigbert, bishop of Merseburg 226  
 Wilhelm, archbishop of Mainz 229  
 Wilhelm, Thuringian count 184  
 William Longsword, Norman duke 46, 69,  
 195  
 William the Conqueror, Norman duke a.  
 king of England 69  
 Willigis, archbishop of Mainz 76, 123, 201,  
 214  
 Winfrid-Boniface, the ‘apostle’ of  
 Germania 100  
 Wipo, chronicler 26, 59, 273, 286–290, 312  
 Wizelin, bishop of Strasbourg 204  
 Wladislaus II Jagiello (Władysław II  
 Jagiełło), king of Poland 258  
 Wodan, Germanic pagan god 259  
 Ziazo, papal dignitary (patrician) 131